NATION

Skyroot unveils 'Vikram-I', India's 1st private rocket

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BUSINESS

Sensex, Nifty fall after after hitting record highs

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SPORTS

Sindarov is Chess World Cup's youngest champ

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## 19-year-old 'key suspect' held from J&K in terror case

**JAMMU, 27 NOV**

A 19-year-old youth who has emerged as a key suspect in a terror-related case in Jammu was arrested on Thursday, police said. A police spokesperson said the accused, a native of Reasi district currently living in Jammu's Bathindi area, was held in connection with an FIR registered under Section 113(3) (terrorist activity) of the Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita (BNS) at Bahu Fort police station.

Preliminary investigations reveal that the accused had been radicalised online and was allegedly planning to execute a terror attack, he said. "It has also come to light that the youth was in contact, through mobile phone, with certain numbers based in Pakistan and other foreign countries," he said. The suspect's digital devices have been seized and are being analysed, the spokesperson said. *—PTI*

## Dhaka court gives Hasina 21-year jail term for graft

**DHAKA, 27 NOV**

A Dhaka court on Thursday sentenced ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina to 21 years in prison and her two children to five years each over alleged irregularities in a government housing project. The verdict came after a trial in absentia. Judge Mohammad Abdullah Al Mamun said the plots in Purbachal were allotted to Hasina without application and beyond legal authority. Hasina received seven years in each of three cases, while her son Sajib Wajed Joy and daughter Saima Wazed Putul were sentenced to five years each. Twenty others, including former housing minister Sharif Ahmed, were also sentenced. The ruling comes ten days after Hasina was sentenced to death by a separate tribunal for "crimes against humanity." Hasina is currently in India. *—PTI*

*>>>More on Page 6*

## Cyclonic storm 'Ditwah' approaches TN

**PUDUCHERRY, 27 NOV**

Cyclonic storm 'Ditwah', formed from a deep depression near the Sri Lankan coast, is moving towards the Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, and Andhra coasts. The storm is likely to bring strong winds and heavy rain, prompting red alerts in Thanjavur, Tiruvarur, Nagapattinam, and Mayiladuthurai, indicating over 20cm of rain in 24 hours. *—PTI*

# SC calls for a watchdog to monitor content online

## Wants Aadhaar to verify age; flags 'anti-national' content

**NEW DELHI, 27 NOV**

Supreme Court on Thursday stressed the need for a neutral, independent and autonomous regulatory body to oversee obscene, offensive or illegal online content, expressing dissatisfaction with existing self-regulation mechanisms.

"Self-styled bodies will not help," Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant said, questioning why violations persisted if current systems were effective.

A Bench of CJI Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi was hearing petitions by podcaster Ranveer Allahbadia and others, who have challenged FIRs linked to allegedly obscene material in the show 'India's Got Latent'.

The Bench suggested that age verification using Aadhaar could be introduced for accessing sensitive content, alongside clearer warnings. Justice Bagchi noted that while obscenity could exist in books and art, the challenge with digital platforms was that unwanted content "forces itself" onto users. CJI Kant added that warnings were insufficient if content began playing before viewers could opt out.

The judges said someone must be accountable for material uploaded on social media. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, for the Centre, argued that the concern extended beyond obscenity to "perversion", calling it a gap in regulating user-generated content.

The court also touched upon "anti-national" content. "Where the content is perceived as anti-national. Will the content creator take responsibility for?" Justice Joymalya Bagchi said.

"The difficulty we are facing is the response time, once the material is uploaded, by the time the authorities react, it has gone viral, to millions of viewers, so how do you control that?" Advocate Prashant Bhushan cautioned against the broad use of the "anti-national" label, arguing that academic or historical discussions risk being wrongly targeted.

The Bench gave the Centre four weeks to propose regulatory measures. *—Agencies*

## SC PUTS RAINA ON CHARITY DUTY FOR DISABILITY JOKE

**NEW DELHI, 27 NOV**

The Supreme Court on Thursday directed stand-up comedian Samay Raina and four other performers to organise two fundraising events every month to support treatment for persons with disabilities, including those with Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA).

A Bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi issued the order while hearing a plea by the Cure SMA India Foundation over online content allegedly undermining the dignity of disabled persons.

The court noted that Raina, along with comedians Vipul Goyal, Balraj Paramjeet Singh Ghai, Sonali Thakkar and Nishant Tanwar, had volunteered to conduct the events and sought to highlight "success stories" of differently-abled individuals.

The directions follow allegations of insensitive jokes, including a reference to a two-month-old SMA patient needing a Rs 16 crore Zolgensma injection. In August, the court had asked the comedians to issue public apologies. *—PTI*

# Dense fog disrupts 41 flights at KIA

**BENGALURU, 27 NOV**

Flight operations at Bengaluru's Kempegowda International Airport were affected on Thursday morning as dense fog reduced visibility and delayed 41 flights since 5.30am.

While the City witnessed light rainfall in the morning, Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) did not issue any severe weather warnings. However, fog and low clouds created challenging conditions for aircraft movement.

IMD said the sky had remained partly cloudy on Wednesday, but Thursday's dense fog worsened visibility around the airport. The weather around the airport is expected to remain slightly cloudy throughout the day, with temperatures ranging from 18°C to 28°C.

At 10 am, meteorological readings at the airport showed a temperature of 20°C, a relative humidity of 73 per cent, and visibility limited to 1,500m. Misty conditions prevailed, and scattered clouds were observed at 800 ft and 1200 ft, further complicating operations for pilots and air traffic controllers.

This comes just two days after another significant disruption impacted international traffic. On Tuesday, seven international flights scheduled between 1am and 6pm were cancelled due to ash from the Ethiopian volcanic eruption drifting into Indian airspace. *—ANI*

**FLORAL FEST**

A visitor poses for a photo at the Flower Show in Bengaluru's Cubbon Park on Thursday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

# 'BJP used CIA, Mossad to defeat Cong in 2014'

**MUMBAI, 27 NOV**

- BJP rejected the remarks as "absurd". Party MP and spokesperson Sambit Patra said BJP wins because "the people of the country" support it.

Congress leader and former Rajya Sabha MP **Kumar Ketkar** has alleged that Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Mossad plotted the Congress' defeat in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, a claim strongly dismissed by BJP on Thursday.

Speaking at a Constitution Day event in Mumbai, Ketkar said Congress had grown from 145 seats in 2004 to 206 in 2009 and could have crossed 250 in 2014 had the trend continued. Instead, it tumbled to 44 seats. He claimed this sharp fall was orchestrated by foreign intelligence agencies that "did not want a stable Congress-led government" in power.

"The game started then," he said, alleging that the CIA, the United States' foreign intelligence agency, and Israel's Mossad, responsible for overseas intelligence gathering and covert operations, had prepared detailed constituency-level data to influence outcomes. While admitting there was disenchantment with the UPA in 2014, he argued the scale of defeat "was not the people's mandate".

BJP rejected the remarks as "absurd". Party MP and spokesperson Sambit Patra said the BJP wins because "the people of the country" support it, not because of the CIA or Mossad. Taking a swipe at the Congress, he instead blamed the ISI for the party's downfall, alleging its stand on issues such as the Ram temple mirrored Pakistan's line. Mocking the Congress' electoral decline, Patra said, "They have six seats now... soon they won't even be in a position to ride a scooty." *—PTI*

## WORLD'S TALLEST RAM STATUE IN GOA

**Prime Minister Narendra Modi will unveil the world's tallest statue of Lord Ram at Shree Samsthan Gokarn Jeevottam Mutt in South Goa district on 28 November.**

| Height | Cost | Material used |
|---|---|---|
| 77 feet | Rs 15 cr | Bronze |

**Location:** Partagal village, Canacona, South Goa.

**Sculptor:** Ram Sutar, who designed the Statue of Unity.

# Dad will complete term: Yathindra

**MYSURU, 27 NOV**

**He is giving good administration. The MLAs are also in his favour. So, I don't see a need for change. But some are asking for a CM post for another person**

—Yathindra Siddaramaiah, MLC

Expressing confidence that Chief Minister Siddaramaiah will complete his five-year term, his son, Congress MLC Yathindra Siddaramaiah, pointed out on Thursday that there are no complaints against his father and he is not involved in any scams.

Asserting that Siddaramaiah is running a good administration, he said the high command will decide on the demand for a change in CM.

The tussle within the Congress intensified amid speculation about a change in chief minister after the Congress government reached the halfway mark of its five-year term on 20 November due to a "power-sharing" agreement between Siddaramaiah and his Deputy, DK Shivakumar in 2023.

Asked about Vokkaliga seer Nirmalanandanatha Swamiji's statement that Shivakumar should become the next chief minister, he said that he wouldn't like to react to others commenting on the matter. The MLC also said that he was not aware of any power-sharing agreement and no one had told him about it. Responding to a question on Shivakumar's statement that "keeping the word is the biggest power," Yathindra said he was not aware of the context in which the former had said it.—*Salar News*

*>>>More on Page 2*

## BJP TO MOVE NO-TRUST MOTION AGAINST CONGRESS

**MANGALURU, 27 NOV**

BJP will move a no-confidence motion against the State government led by Siddaramaiah during next month's Belagavi Assembly session, the BJP's State General Secretary, V. Sunil Kumar, said on Thursday.

He said that if the Congress government falls, the BJP will not stake its claim to form a government.

He said that due to the fight between Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, the state administration had come to a standstill.

"About 90 percent of ministers are not coming to their offices in Bengaluru," Kumar said. "Siddaramaiah has restricted his moves to Mysuru and Shivakumar is in Delhi," he said.

"This government has lost confidence. There is no trust between the Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister and ministers and MLAs," he said. "We will expose the Congress government in the Belagavi session and move a no-confidence motion against the government," Kumar added. *—Agencies*

**REVIVES 2020 ROW**

# *Nepal's new Rs 100 note features Indian territories*

**KATHMANDU, 27 NOV**

Nepal's central bank on Thursday issued new Rs 100 denomination bank notes that have a revised map of the country, including the controversial Kalapani, Lipulekh and Limpiyadhura territories, termed as "artificial enlargement" by India.

The new note from the Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) bears the signature of previous Governor Maha Prasad Adhikari. The date of issuance of the bank note is mentioned as 2081 BS, which denotes the previous year, 2024.

During the prime minister KP Sharma Oli-led government, Nepal had updated the map, comprising Kalapani, Lipulek and Limpiyadhura territories, through a Parliament endorsement in May 2020.

An NRB spokesperson said that the map is already there in the old Rs 100 bank note and it has been revised as per the government's decision.

India maintains that Lipulekh, Kalapani and Limpiyadhura belong to it.

India had in 2020 reacted sharply, calling Nepal's revised map a "unilateral act" and cautioned Kathmandu that such "artificial enlargement" . *—PTI*

## Assam passes bill banning polygamy

**GUWAHATI, 27 NOV**

The Assam Assembly passed a bill on Thursday banning polygamy, making it an offence which may lead to a maximum imprisonment of 10 years, barring some exceptions.

It kept people belonging to the Scheduled Tribe (ST) and areas under the Sixth Schedule out of the purview of the law.

During the passage of the Assam Prohibition of Polygamy Bill, 2025, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who also holds the Home portfolio, said the law is "irrespective of religion and not against Islam as being perceived."

"Hindus are not free from polygamy. This bill will cover people from Hindu, Muslim, Christian faiths," he added.

On the Uniform Civil Code (UCC), Sarma said this will be implemented in Assam if he becomes the CM again after the Assam assembly polls next year. The CM also said, "A bill against marriages through deception will be introduced by February-end. So, whatever we have spoken about love-jihad, we will do." *—PTI*

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# Factions choose sides as power tussle heats up

## Vokkaliga Sangha: Will fight if there's injustice to DKS

**BENGALURU, 27 NOV**

Karnataka Rajya Vokkaligara Sangha on Thursday warned the Congress High Command that it will fight vehemently if injustice happens to Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, who is aspiring to become CM.

Shivakumar, the Congress State President, belongs to the dominant agrarian community of Vokkaliga.

"During the assembly election, Shivakumar had toiled hard, toured across the State, strengthened the organisation and due to his efforts the Congress got 140 seats and won the polls," Sangha President L Srinivas said. "We from Vokkaliga Sangha request the Congress High Command to at least give him 'Coolie' (a token of reward) to Shivakumar for the efforts he has put in."

He noted reports that the Congress High Command had earlier promised Shivakumar that he will be made the Chief Minister after Siddaramaiah completes two-and-half years term.

Requesting the Congress high command to ulfil the promise made to Shivakumar, Srinivas said the Deputy CM had also spent time in jail for the party.

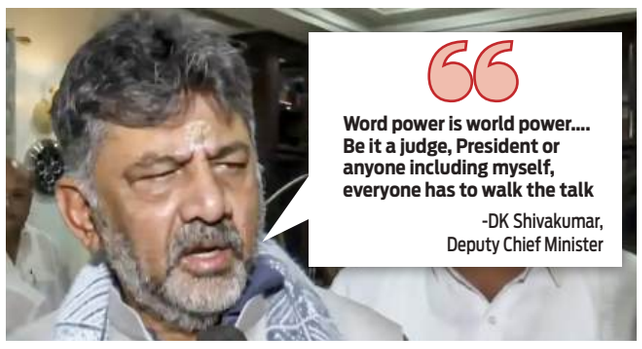
"No injustice should happen to the disciplined soldier of the Congress party. We from Vokkaliga Sangha on behalf of the Vokkaliga pontiffs assert that we will vehemently fight if injustice happens to Shivakumar," he said.

Siddaramaiah had been the CM for five years during his previous stint and now this time, he completed two-and-half years, Srinivas, the former Bengaluru deputy mayor, added.

Meanwhile, Shivakumar and Siddaramaiah said that they will go to New Delhi if the High Command calls then. Shivakumar said that he was going to Mumbai on Friday.

Earlier, a Vokkaliga seer Nirmalanandanatha Swamiji has said it was both his personal view and the sentiment within the community that Shivakumar should become the next Chief Minister.

The pontiff of the Adichunchunagiri Mutt noted that the community has contributed leaders across all major parties—JD(S), BJP and Congress. *—Agencies*


Word power is world power.... Be it a judge, President or anyone including myself, everyone has to walk the talk
-DK Shivakumar, Deputy Chief Minister

## AHINDA communities warn Cong against unseating CM

**BENGALURU, 27 NOV**

The Karnataka State Federation of Backward Class Communities (KSFBCC) has warned Congress that any attempt to unseat Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in the wake of infighting in the Congress will have a bearing on the party.

KSFBCC President KM Ramachandrappa said the AHINDA community (minorities backward classes and Dalits) are deeply pained seeing the developments.

Ramachandrappa replied to Karnataka Rajya Vokkaligara Sangha President L Srinivas's "coolie" (reward) remark and said DK Shivakumar has already got "coolie" as the Deputy Chief Minister. He also expressed disappointment that religious bodies were entering the discussion.

"These threats are not new ones but have been happening for very long time... We the downtrodden community will not bow down to these threats," he said.

Ramachandrappa said, "If those against the caste census can unseat the Chief Minister, we can only assume how they will behave with our communities".

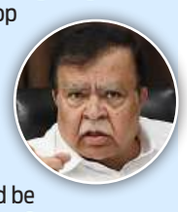
"If this development continues further, then we warn that it will be problematic for Congress in the coming days," he added.

"If the pontiffs and the Vokkaliga Sangha is ready to stage agitation then we will also not leave our leader," he added. "The 70 per cent population of AHINDA communities... will not tolerate attempts to bring down a leader from the community."

Meanwhile, Siddaramaiah held a meeting with senior ministers and leaders considered close to him including G Parameshwara, Satish Jarkiholi, HC Mahadevappa, K Venkatesh and KN Rajanna at his residence. *—Agencies*

An man rolls on the ground while pooja to CM Siddaramaiah ***PHOTO: PTI***

### Dissolve assembly and fight polls: Congress MLA



Senior Congress MLA and former minister KN Rajanna said the party should dissolve the Assembly and face elections if the infighting doesn't stop soon. The Siddaramaiah-loyalist said the decision should be made by the Congress Legislative Party (CPL) "Let's work together under the leadership of DK Shivakumar and come with a majority," he quipped. "Then let him serve as the CM for 5 years. Wasn't it the Congress Legislature Party (CLP) that elected Siddaramaiah? Now the decision should be made by the CLP." He said that the second option for the Chief Minister post was Dr G Parameshwara.

### AICC leader: CM, DyCM exploiting party's leniency

Congress leader Udit Raj on Thursday lambasted party leaders in Karnataka, saying they take "unnecessary advantage" of the party's leniency and liberal stand. "There is a loss in being a liberal party, and its leaders sometimes take unnecessary advantage of that. They do whatever comes to mind. They should talk to the High Command and be disciplined. What is this mindset that they enjoy being in Opposition, and when they come to power, they start feeling restless?"

## High Command will resolve issue in a week: Parameshwara

**BENGALURU, 27 NOV**

Home Minister G Parameshwara expressed confidence that the Congress High Command should be able to resolve the ongoing power tussle in the State in a week's time.

A contender himself for the CM's post, he spoke highly of both Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his Deputy DK Shivakumar on Thursday.

Shivakumar certainly has a claim for the CM post and there is nothing wrong with it, he said. In the event of a power transition, it should be smooth and Siddaramaiah has to be taken into confidence, Parameshwara added.

The senior Congress leader said that if given an opportunity, with his experience and administrative skills, he will definitely do well and serve the people of Karnataka, and keep up the ideologies of the Congress party. However, he added that he will not lobby for the post.

"(AICC Chief Mallikarjun Kharge) knows everything. Maybe in a week's time they should be able to resolve this. It is not impossible. If not a big exercise at least some exercise will happen," Parameshwara added.

Reiterating that he is not aware of any "power sharing" arrangement, he said, "But, of late, claims about power sharing between Siddaramaiah and Shivkumar have come out . If that is true, and if there is an agreement made at the High Command level, definitely everybody will agree."

"Siddaramaiah's contribution is very important, not just as a backward class leader, but as a leader in the State, he has a lot of following," he added. *—PTI*

### Jarkiholi greeted by 'next CM' chants

PwD Minister Satish Jarkiholi was greeted by supporters chanting slogans in his favour to become the next Chief Minister. He said on Thursday that party workers have urged the high command to step in and settle the matter. "Everyone has requested to resolve this CM-DCM matter. It will get resolved soon," Jarkiholi said.

## Will call for meeting, end CM issue: Kharge

**BENGALURU, 27 NOV**

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Thursday said he will call for a meeting of senior leaders, including Rahul Gandhi, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy CM DK Shivakumar in New Delhi to discuss the raging leadership issue.

He said the leaders will discuss the way forward and settle the issue, and thereby put an end to the "confusion" that is there.

"After going to Delhi, I will call three-four important leaders and discuss. After the discussion, we will say how to go ahead; thereby put an end to the confusion," Kharge told reporters press in the City.

Asked if the CM and his Deputy will be called to Delhi, he said, "We should certainly call them and discuss. We will call them, discuss with them and settle the issue."

The AICC Chief added that the High Command means a team, not an individual. "Our High Command team will discuss and decide." *— PTI*

### Dubai firms express interest in Int'l Job Fair

**DUBAI, 27 NOV**

Dozens of skill-based companies from the UAE, particularly from Dubai, have expressed interest in participating in the Bangalore International Job Fair scheduled for January–February 2026, said Minister for Skill Development and Medical Education, Dr Sharanaprakash R Patil. Companies from sectors like transportation, human resources technology, soft services, media technology, gaming, real estate, energy, and allied health sciences showed strong interest during the Dubai roadshow led by Patil and Higher Education Minister Dr MC Sudhakar.
*—Salar News*

PHOTO: SALAR

### Governor presents honourary degree to Speaker Khader

**BENGALURU, 27 NOV:**

The Governor of Karnataka, Thaawarchand Gehlot, presented the honorary Doctor of Letters (D.Litt.) degree to the Speaker of the Karnataka Assembly, UT Khader. The degree, conferred by the Bangalore University during its 60th convocation, was formally handed over at a special ceremony at the Raj Bhavan Banquet Hall.In his address, the Governor extended congratulations, "Conferring the honourable title of D Litt is the highest recognition of your scholarship. This honour reflects your work, creativity, and exceptional intellectual ability. You have earned distinction through your personal commitment, simplicity, and constant engagement with the people."
*—Salar News*

## Flood-hit farmers get additional Rs 1,033 crore relief

**BENGALURU, 27 NOV**

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Thursday announced an additional grant of over Rs 1,033 crore to the farmers affected by floods this year.

The Chief Minister said the Karnataka government has also put forth a request to the Centre to release State's share of compensation to the farmers.

Briefing press in the City, Siddaramaiah said there is crop loss in 14.58 lakh hectare area and there are 14.24 lakh affected farmers in the State.

"As per State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) norms, we are giving compensation. Farmers had earlier received funds under SDRF. Today the State government is giving additional money to the tune of Rs 1,033.6 crore," he said.

Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda, who was also present on the occasion, said the amount is already in the bank accounts of the Deputy Commissioners (DCs) of the districts. DCs are the disbursement officers.

Gowda added that the farmers will get through Aadhaar Enabled Payment System (AEPS).

**CM ASKS CENTRE FOR FUNDS**

Siddaramaiah said the State has informed the Centre that there was damage of property in State due to floods to the tune of Rs 3,455 crore.

"We cannot ask for so much funds because we have to go by the norms. As per norms, we are supposed to get Rs 1,521.67 crore as relief fund to the farmers. We request the Centre to release grants for compensation to the farmers," he said.

"We have asked the Centre for 1,521.67 crore for recovery and reconstruction and Rs 614.9 crore for compensation," Siddaramaiah noted. *—PTI*

**THE PLANTS ARE ALIVE**

An elephant made of capsicum, gourd and tomato and a fish made of flowers during the 11-day Flower Show at Cubbon Park, in Bengaluru on Thursday. Day one say almost 34,000 people attend

***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

## Cabinet urges Centre to procure maize

**BENGALURU, 27 NOV**

The Karnataka Cabinet urged the Central government to come forward to procure maize and rescue the farmers who are in distress following the severe price crash.

Detailing Cabinet decisions, Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister HK Patil said, by adding some urban local bodies and some villages to the Mysuru Mahanagara Palike (Corporation), the Cabinet has approved its conversion into 'Bruhat Mysuru Mahanagara Palike' (Greater Mysuru City Corporation).

He said approval was also given to implement the "Operation and Maintenance of Landfill Sites" package works through BSWML at an estimated cost of Rs 100 crore for the proper management of solid waste within the jurisdiction of Greater Bengaluru Authority.

Approval was given to the one-time settlement (OTS) under which interest, penalty and other charges will be waived by 100 per cent if the customers of Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board are paying the principal amount of water dues in one go.

The minister said the dues are to the tune of Rs 701 crore. Out of this, principal amount is Rs 439 crore and interest is Rs 262 crore. Three months time limit has been given from the date of issual of the order.

Among the things that were also approved are: administrative approval to undertake construction of check-dams and lake development works in the Kalyan Karnataka region at an estimated cost of Rs 200 crore; the "Drugs and Cosmetics (Karnataka Amendment) Bill, 2025"; the Karnataka State Haj Committee Regulations, 2025, pertaining to the functioning of the Haj Committee. *—PTI*

**ONLINE GAMING FRAUD**

## *WinZO founders held in money laundering case*

**NEW DELHI/BENGALURU, 27 NOV**

The Enforcement Directorate has arrested WinZO co-founders **Saumya Singh Rathore** and **Paavan Nanda** on money laundering charges linked to alleged irregularities in the real-money gaming sector. Officials said the duo were taken into custody in Bengaluru on Wednesday after questioning at the agency's zonal office and were produced before a local court, which remanded them to one-day ED custody. They are expected to be presented again for further orders.

The ED alleged that WinZO withheld Rs 43 crore belonging to gamers, which should have been refunded after the Centre banned real-money games on 22 August, 2025. The agency last week searched the premises of WinZO, Gamezkraft and their promoters under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act.

According to investigators, WinZO allowed users to play against algorithms without disclosing that they were not competing against humans, and continued operating real-money games in countries such as Brazil, the US and Germany through a platform hosted in India. Bonds, fixed deposits and mutual funds worth Rs 505 crore held by WinZO Games were frozen.

The agency further alleged that funds were diverted abroad under the guise of overseas investments, with USD 55 million parked in a US-based shell entity. *—PTI*

### Lakshman Singh made K-RIDE's Managing Director

**BENGALURU, 27 NOV**

The Centre has approved the appointment of Lakshman Singh, an officer of the Indian Railway Service of Engineers (IRSE), as the Managing Director of Rail Infrastructure Development Company (Karnataka) Ltd (K-RIDE). This decision comes amid ongoing concerns about the slow progress of the Bengaluru Suburban Railway Project (BSRP), primarily attributed to the lack of a technical expert leading the organisation.

Singh, currently serving as Chief General Manager (Civil) at Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Ltd (BMRCL), will take on the new role on a deputation basis, retaining his current salary and receiving a deputation allowance. *—PTI*

## Digital Mobile Planetarium hits the streets

**BENGALURU, 27 NOV**

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah launched the State's 'Digital Mobile Planetarium' initiative at the Vidhana Soudha on Thursday, to strengthen the learning of science in rural Karnataka.

The Planetarium brings an immersive astronomy experience directly to school campuses through vehicles equipped with a 5-metre dome, 360-degree fish-eye projection, air-conditioning and advanced audio systems. Minister for Science & Technology, NS Boseraj said it will be expanded to all districts. *—PTI*

PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

PHOTO: PTI

## Murmu is 1st Prez to address Odisha Assembly

**BHUBANESWAR, 27 NOV**

President Droupadi Murmu made history on Thursday by becoming the first President to address the Odisha Legislative Assembly during her two-day visit to the state. This address in the Odisha Assembly marks a significant milestone as Murmu, a former member of the assembly elected twice from the Rairangpur seat, returns to her political roots. Prior to the address, she inaugurated the Kalinga Atithi Nivas after arriving at Biju Patnaik International Airport. Speaker Surama Padhy confirmed that Murmu visited her former ministerial chamber, which has been renovated for the occasion. Elaborate security arrangements have been made ahead of the assembly's Winter Session commencing on Friday. *—PTI*

## 3 militants held for bomb threats to Manipur festival

**IMPHAL, 27 NOV**

Security forces have apprehended three militants, including a woman, accused of threatening to detonate explosives during the ongoing Sangai tourism festival in Manipur, authorities confirmed on Thursday. The arrests were made during a collaborative operation between the Manipur Police and the Assam Rifles, targeting active members of the banned KCP (MFL). The operation took place on Wednesday, following alarming threats made in a Facebook video by an anonymous user on 21 November, which warned of plans to bomb the festival occurring from 21 to 30 November. The militants were captured in the districts of Imphal East, Imphal West, and Thoubal, with investigations continuing. The festival was boycotted by displaced persons and civil society groups *—PTI*

## Nun held for issuing bomb threat to Kerala CM

**T'PURAM, 27 NOV**

A self-styled nun, Teena Jose, has been arrested following a social media post in which she allegedly called for a bomb attack on Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan. The police lodged a case at the Thiruvananthapuram City Cyber Police Station after receiving a complaint from a New Delhi-based lawyer. Jose has been charged under sections 192 (provocation with intent to cause riot) and 351(2) (criminal intimidation) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. The religious congregation she once belonged to stated that her membership was revoked in 2009, forbidding her from wearing religious attire. Jose, a Kochi resident and an advocate, cited her legal battles against vocational norms for religious persons. *—PTI*

## Woman files complaint against Mamkootathil

**T'PURAM, 27 NOV**

A woman submitted a sexual assault complaint to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan against suspended Congress MLA Rahul Mankootathil. The complaint came shortly after a new purported audio recording of a conversation between the two surfaced online. The complaint has been forwarded to the State Police Chief for further action. In response, Mankootathil said, "I am convinced that I have done no wrong, I will continue to fight legally." Mankootathil has multiple allegations of sexual misconduct against him. He was suspended from the primary membership of the Congress on 25 August following the allegations. State Health Minister Veena George expressed solidarity with the victim, saying Kerala was with her. *—PTI*

# '26L WB voters mismatch 2002 list'

### Says number of such voters may rise amid digitation of enumeration forms

**KOLKATA, 27 NOV**

The Election Commission has reported that nearly 26 lakh voters' names in West Bengal's current electoral rolls did not match with the voter list of 2002, an official said.

The discrepancy emerged after the state's latest voter list was compared with those prepared across different states between 2002 and 2006 during the previous Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise, he said on 26 November.

According to EC sources, more than six crore enumeration forms in West Bengal had been digitised by Wednesday afternoon under the ongoing SIR process.

"Once digitised, these forms are brought under the mapping procedure, where they are matched against the previous SIR records.

Initial findings show that the names of around 26 lakh voters in the state cannot yet be reconciled with the data from the last SIR cycle," the official said.

He said that the figure may rise further as digitisation continues.

In the electoral context, "mapping" refers to cross-verifying the latest published voter list with the SIR rolls last compiled in 2002.

This year, the mapping exercise has also included voter lists from other states, a step taken by the office of the Chief Electoral Officer to ensure a more comprehensive and accurate verification process, he said.

However, a mismatch in mapping does not mean automatic removal from the final electoral roll, the official clarified. *—PTI*

A booth level officer at work during a sit-in demonstration near the Election Commission in Kolkata in West Bengal *PHOTO: PTI*

## CENTRE, EC THREATENING BLOS WITH JOB LOSS: MAMATA

**KOLKATA, 27 NOV**

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday criticised the Centre and the Election Commission of India (ECI) over Booth Level Officer (BLO) deaths in the state, questioning the hurried implementation of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise.

Addressing the media at Red Road, she demanded accountability for BLO deaths in BJP-ruled states like Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan. Mamata alleged BLOs were being threatened with job loss and imprisonment.

She also criticised the ECI for delaying a meeting with a 10-member delegation of BLO representatives from her government, noting it took 48 hours for officials to listen to their grievances. Highlighting errors in enumeration forms and distribution figures, she questioned the feasibility of completing three years' work in two months.

Chief Electoral Officer Manoj Kumar Agarwal confirmed receiving complaints of BLOs under pressure, with some falling ill, and said District Magistrates have been asked to submit police and postmortem reports.

Mamata stressed that while the government does not oppose SIR, no genuine voter should be removed, calling for an impartial ECI. *—PTI*

## TMC questions EC's AI app

**NEW DELHI, 27 NOV**

TMC Rajya Sabha MP Saket Gokhale on Thursday questioned the "mysterious" AI application the Election Commission (EC) plans to use in West Bengal's ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. The EC said the AI system will verify voter data by analysing facial similarities across photographs to identify duplicates and prevent the inclusion of fake or deceased voters. Gokhale asked why AI is necessary when existing software can identify duplicates and questioned transparency. *—PTI*

## Special camps for sex workers

**KOLKATA, 27 NOV**

The Election Commission (EC) plans a special assistance camp for sex workers in Sonagachi to address concerns over the ongoing Summary Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. Many residents of Asia's largest red-light district face difficulties tracing the mandatory 2002 voter records. The move follows appeals from several organisations highlighting that many such women never lived with parents, were abandoned, or cannot access family documents due to social stigma. *—PTI*

# Sukanta faces protest; TMC says BJP's internal rift

Sukanta Majumdar *PHOTO: PTI*

**KOLKATA, 27 NOV**

Union Minister and former West Bengal BJP chief Sukanta Majumdar faced "go back" slogans and a brief convoy blockade at Diamond Harbour in South 24 Parganas on Thursday. The TMC described the incident as the outcome of an internal rift within the BJP.

Majumdar, returning from a foreign tour, was en route to meet party workers when a group of youths allegedly surrounded his convoy near Sarisa More. Some protesters, claiming to be grassroots BJP workers, raised slogans alleging neglect by senior leaders.

"The entire protest was planned. There is no law and order in Bengal," Majumdar told reporters, blaming the TMC for engineering the obstruction and adding, "If we can help cool things down in Jammu and Kashmir, I can do it here too."

The convoy was halted briefly before police intervention. The TMC called the protesters "disgruntled BJP workers" and framing the episode as an internal party feud, highlighting tensions ahead of the 2026 West Bengal Assembly elections. *—PTI*

# MLA Sengottaiyan joins Vijay's TVK

**CHENNAI, 27 NOV**

Nine-time AIADMK MLA KA Sengottaiyan, expelled from the party recently, joined actor-politician Vijay-led Tamizhaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) here on Thursday, a day after he resigned as legislator.

The 77-year-old leader and his supporters, including a former MP, were welcomed into the party fold by its founder Vijay.

AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami, however, declined to comment, saying Sengottaiyan was no longer with the AIADMK.

The former state minister and senior politician, who was hailed as MGR loyalist, arrived at the TVK headquarters in Panaiyur here, and joined the party along with several supporters, including former AIADMK MP V Sathyabama. Sengottaiyan was presented with a yellow-red TVK shawl by Vijay, who hailed his 50 years of political experience.

Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam leader Vijay with former MLA KA Sengottaiyan, as the latter joins the party, at the Panaiyur office *PHOTO: PTI*

The former minister had joined the AIADMK when its founder MG Ramachandran founded the party in 1972 after walking out of the DMK following differences with its then chief M Karunanidhi.

Sengottaiyan's presence in the party would help to strengthen the party in the Kongu region, especially eight Assembly constituencies in Erode district from where he hails.

Sengottaiyan was expelled from the AIADMK by Palaniswami on October 31 after he met and interacted with sacked leaders Panneerselvam, TTV Dhinakaran, and the latter's aunt VK Sasikala in Ramanathapuram, seeking their re-induction into the party. 14 supporters of Sengottaiyan including Sathyabama, too, were removed from the AIADMK.

BJP state Chief Nainar Nagendran asserted that the BJP-AIADMK alliance would not be affected by Sengottaiyan's decision to join the TVK. *—PTI*

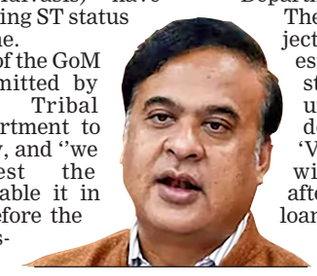
# Assam approves report on ST status to 6 groups

**GUWAHATI, 27 NOV**

The Assam cabinet has approved a report of the Group of Ministers (GoM) regarding the proposal for grant of Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to six major communities of the state, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

The six communities which are Tai Ahom, Chutia, Moran, Motok, Koch-Rajbongshi and Tea Tribes (Adivasis) – have been demanding ST status for a long time.

The report of the GoM will be submitted by the state's Tribal Affairs Department to the Assembly, and "we will request the Speaker to table it in the House before the winter session ends on Saturday", Sarma said.



The three-member GoM comprised Education Minister Ranoj Pegu, Water Resources Minister Pijush Hazarika and Information and Technology Minister Keshab Mahanta.

The cabinet has also approved the modification and transfer of 99 acres of land under the Handloom, Textiles and Sericulture Department, to the Cultural Affairs Department.

The land will be subjected to use for the establishment of a state-of-the-art museum, where the famed devotional textile 'Vrindavani Vastra' will be on display, after being brought on loan from the British Museum in London. *—PTI*

# Congress slams Centre over new definition of Aravalli Hills

**NEW DELHI, 27 NOV**

The Congress on Thursday criticised the Modi government after the Environment Ministry reportedly recommended a new definition of the Aravalli Hills, warning it could have "very grave environmental and public health consequences" and urging an immediate review.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said the revised definition, purportedly aimed at restricting mining, would exclude nearly 90 per cent of the Aravalli Hills from protection. "The Aravalli Hills stretch from Delhi through Haryana and Rajasthan to Gujarat. Over the years, they have suffered from mining, construction, and other violations of laws and regulations," he said on X.

According to reports, the Union Environment Ministry recommended the new definition to the Supreme Court, which has reportedly accepted it. Under the proposal, landforms at an elevation of 100 meters or more above local relief, along with their slopes and adjacent land, will be counted as Aravalli Hills.

Ramesh warned this would leave most of the range unrecognised, opening it to mining and construction, with serious ecological and public health implications, including worsening air quality in the NCR. "The road to hell is indeed paved with good intentions," he added. *—PTI*

**FOR ENERGY SECURITY**

# PM: Nuclear sector open for pvt players

**HYDERABAD, 27 NOV**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said India's tightly controlled nuclear power sector will soon be opened for private players, a move that will give new strength to the country's energy security.

The PM made the remarks during a function to inaugurate Skyroot Aerospace's Infinity campus here. "We are moving towards opening the nuclear sector as well. We are laying the foundation for a strong role for the private sector in this field too," Modi said in his address through video conferencing.

The government has set a target of generating 100 GW of nuclear power by 2047, a more than 10-fold increase from the current capacity of 8.8 GW of atomic energy generation.

"This will create opportunities in small modular reactors, advanced reactors and nuclear innovation. This reform will give new strength to our energy security and technological leadership," Modi said.

The government has listed The Atomic Energy Bill, 2025 for introduction during the Winter session of Parliament beginning December 1. The Bill seeks to open up the nuclear power sector for private sector participation.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had also announced plans to amend the nuclear liability law. The Atomic Energy Act, 1962 prohibits the participation of the private sector or even governments. Under this law, the power to operate nuclear power plants is vested in the central government and companies or corporations established by it. *—PTI*

**MONEY LAUNDERING CASE**

# *ED raids medical colleges in 10 states*

**NEW DELHI, 27 NOV**

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) conducted coordinated searches across 10 states, as part of a money laundering investigation. ED is looking into the regulatory framework governing certain medical colleges in connection with alleged bribery and manipulation. The action is being undertaken under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA)

Seven medical and private colleges across Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi are being covered.

In June, Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) registered an FIR, alleging that government officials, including officials of the National Medical Commission (NMC) were bribed for confidential information. This allegedly enabled them to manipulate the parameters and obtain approval for running academic courses at the medical colleges, according to ED officials.

CBI had registered an FIR, alleging that officials of the National Medical Commission were bribed for confidential information *PHOTO: AI*

CBI arrested eight people in the case which included three doctors of the NMC team who were held for allegedly taking a bribe of Rs 55 lakh for giving a favourable report to a Chhattisgarh-based medical college.

The FIR named 34 people, including eight officials in the health ministry, one from the National Health Authority and five doctors on the NMC inspection team. The FIR alleged that the eight health officials ran a sophisticated scheme facilitating unauthorised access, illegal duplication and dissemination of confidential files and sensitive information to representatives of medical colleges through intermediaries in exchange for bribes. They manipulated the statutory NMC inspection process. *—PTI*

# FRROs appointed in states under new immigration law

**NEW DELHI, 27 NOV**

The Centre has appointed three new Foreigners Regional Registration Officers (FFROs) under the Bureau of Immigration in Chandigarh, Jaipur and Guwahati, a government order said.

The newly appointed FRROs for Chandigarh will cover the Union Territory and Haryana, the FRRO for Jaipur will cover Rajasthan, and the FRRO for Guwahati will cover Assam.

The appointments have been made under the new Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025, which came into effect on 1 September this year.

The comprehensive legislation regulates all matters related to foreigners and immigration, which were until then administered through four Acts, which were repealed.

According to the law, anyone found using a forged passport or visa to enter India, stay in or exit from the country will be punishable up to seven years in jail and a fine of up to Rs 10 lakh.

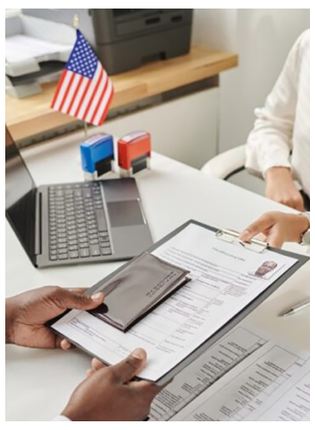


PHOTO: FREEPIK

Hotels, universities and other educational institutions, and hospitals will have to furnish information about foreigners. *—PTI*

## HC bins charges on 28 advocates in 2009 violence

**CHENNAI, 27 NOV**

The Madras High Court has quashed the charges filed against 28 advocates related to the police-lawyers violence that erupted on 19 February, 2009, in the court premises. Justice M Nirmal Kumar granted relief to Advocate Rajnikanth and his associates, annulling the chargesheet submitted by the CBI. Additionally, the court also dismissed the charges against four police officers following their petitions. The violence was triggered by a confrontation over the hurling of rotten eggs at then Janata Party leader Subramanian Swamy in court, leading to clashes and injuries among advocates, policemen, and a High Court judge, as well as damage to several vehicles. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

## Delhi HC protects Ajay Devgn's personality rights

**NEW DELHI, 27 NOV**

The Delhi High Court on Thursday restrained several websites and online platforms from using Bollywood actor Ajay Devgn's name or images for commercial purposes without consent. Justice Manmeet Pritam Singh Arora also barred the use of Devgn's persona through AI and deepfakes and ordered removal of certain obscene online content. Advocate Pravin Anand said defendants were producing merchandise and offensive images impersonating the actor. The court noted that plaintiffs must first lodge complaints with platforms like YouTube before approaching the court. Summonses were issued to defendants, and a detailed interim order is expected. The suit seeks to protect Devgn's name, likeness, voice, and persona. *—PTI*

## Bombay HC flags delay in Disha Salian death probe

**MUMBAI, 27 NOV**

The Bombay High Court on Thursday criticised the prolonged police inquiry into the death of former celebrity manager Disha Salian. She died on 8 June, 2020 after falling from the 14th floor of a Malad building, with the police registering an Accidental Death Report (ADR). A bench of Justices AS Gadkari and RR Bhonsale said five years had passed, adding the police only needed to determine whether it was suicide or culpable homicide. Salian's father, Satish Salian, has petitioned for a CBI probe, alleging his daughter was gang-raped and murdered and seeking an FIR against Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aditya Thackeray. The court directed the police to provide legally permissible documents, including statements and the post mortem report, and listed the matter for 11 December. *—PTI*

## HC: Volcanic ash not to blame for Mumbai pollution

**MUMBAI, 27 NOV**

The Bombay High Court on Thursday rejected claims that ash from Ethiopia's recent volcanic eruption caused Mumbai's poor air quality, noting that the city has suffered high pollution levels for years. A bench of Chief Justice Shree Chandrashekhar and Justice Gautam Ankhad heard pleas filed in 2023 on air pollution. Senior counsels Darius Khambata and Janak Dwarkadas said the city's AQI has consistently exceeded 300 this month. Government pleader Jyoti Chavan argued the eruption worsened pollution, but the court said visibility had already been poor even before the volcano. Referring to Delhi's alarming AQI, the judges questioned what effective measures could be taken. The matter is listed for further hearing on Friday. *—PTI*

PM Narendra Modi unveils Vikram-I, Skyroot Aerospace's first orbital launch vehicle capable of placing satellites into orbit, in New Delhi PHOTO: PTI

# Skyroot unveils 'Vikram-I', India's 1st private rocket

## PM Modi virtually opens Hyd-based private space facility

**HYDERABAD, 27 NOV**

Skyroot Aerospace on Thursday unveiled its flight-ready Vikram-I, India's first private orbital rocket, designed to deploy multiple satellites in a single mission. Developed fully in-house in under four years, the carbon-fibre launch vehicle marks a major milestone for the Hyderabad-based space startup.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who virtually inaugurated the Infinity Campus, said Skyroot's progress reflects the impact of recent space-sector reforms that opened the industry to private players.

He said more than 300 space startups were now shaping India's future and praised Gen-Z engineers for driving innovation across propulsion systems, composite materials and satellite platforms. Modi added that India's cost-effective and reliable capabilities were attracting global interest in satellite manufacturing and launch partnerships.

At the launch event, Skyroot co-founder and CEO Pawan Kumar Chandana said Vikram-I is slated for its debut mission within two months. The new Infinity Campus, spread across two lakh sq.ft., will support end-to-end rocket design, integration and testing, complementing the firm's existing Max-Q facility established last year.

Skyroot plans to invest Rs 1,000 crore to build rapid, on-demand launch capability, co-founder and COO Naga Bharath Daka said, noting that the firm has already created over 1,000 high-tech jobs. Vikram-I follows the company's 2022 success with Vikram-S, India's first privately built rocket.

Modi recalled India's early space efforts, noting that the nation had moved from transporting rocket parts on bicycles to operating trusted launch vehicles and enabling an open, innovation-driven ecosystem.

He said ISRO's facilities were now accessible to start-ups and stressed that India must capitalise on rising global demand for small satellites. Highlighting the broader startup surge across sectors, he said the government aims to expand Atal Tinkering Labs to boost research and nurture young innovators. *—PTI*

# Left leaders back Munambam over Waqf property dispute

**KOCHI, 27 NOV**

CPI State Secretary Binoy Viswam here on Thursday said the rights of people fighting to secure ownership of their land claimed as Waqf property will not be compromised.

He was speaking after the recent Kerala High Court directive asking the state government to accept land tax from residents of Munambam.

He said the revenue department had earlier decided to collect land tax from the affected families, but the move was halted following a previous

Binoy Viswam PHOTO: PTI

High Court order.

"Now that hurdle has been cleared. The Communist Party and the state government thank the High Court," he added.

Industries Minister P Rajeev said the state government remains firm on its stand that no one will be evicted from their land.

He said the decision regarding ending the relay protest lies with its organisers — the Munambam Land Protection Committee.

The Munambam issue concerns the Waqf Board claiming around 400 acres as Waqf land. Over 600 families who bought land several years ago have been protesting for the past 411 days.

The agitators are expected to meet soon to decide on ending the protest. *—PTI*

## 1,400 ASSAM SCHOOLS LACK AMENITIES

**Nearly 1,400 primary and mid-level government schools in Assam's rural belts operate without basic drinking water and toilet facilities, the assembly was told on Thursday.**

**Here is a look at the gap in basic amenities:**

**1,391** schools lack functional drinking water or toilets.

**347** schools have no drinking water.

**809** schools have no toilets.

**27,936** teaching posts vacant.

# In a first, ED raids India-Myanmar border

**NEW DELHI/AIZAWL, 27 NOV**

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) conducted its first-ever raids along the India-Myanmar border in Mizoram on Thursday.

The intense effort targeted locations in Assam and Gujarat as part of a money laundering investigation linked to drug trafficking.

Officials reported the seizure of Rs 35 lakh in cash and electronic devices during the operation.

The searches, carried out under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), involved areas in Aizawl, Champhai, Sribhumi (Karimganj), and Ahmedabad. This action follows a Mizoram Police FIR related to the seizure of 4.72kg of heroin valued at Rs 1.41 crore from six individuals.

The Enforcement Directorate uncovered "financial linkages" between firms in Mizoram and companies in Gujarat.

The firms allegedly supplied precursor chemicals for methamphetamine production.

The chemicals are believed to be transported across the "porous" international border, with final products smuggled back into India.

"Our analysis detected deposits worth Rs 52.8 crore in narco-hawala operators' accounts," officials stated, adding that some operators are currently being questioned. *—PTI*

# Kerala: Pregnant woman found dead with burns

**THRISSUR, 27 NOV**

A 20-year-old pregnant woman, Archana, was discovered dead with severe burn injuries near her husband's home in Thrissur, Kerala, prompting police to register a case of dowry harassment. Her husband, Sharon, and mother-in-law, Rajani, are accused in the FIR, which alleges Archana faced physical and mental torture over unpaid dowry. It claims a substance similar to thinner was used to set her ablaze. Archana's father, Haridasan, shared, "She got married seven months ago in a love match, but Sharon frequently assaulted her and doubted her character." Despite urging her to return home, Archana chose to stay.

Sharon is in police custody while a Deputy Superintendent leads the investigation; the body will be released after a post-mortem. *—PTI*

## Haryana CM orders probe into teen athletes' deaths

**CHANDIGARH, 27 NOV**

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini has mandated a comprehensive inspection of all sports complexes in the state after the tragic deaths of two teenage basketball players due to the collapse of rusted iron poles.

In his statement, Saini expressed heartfelt condolences and announced a financial assistance of Rs 5 lakh for the families of the deceased athletes.

The first victim, 16-year-old Hardik Rathi, died after the accident in Rohtak, while 15-year-old Aman succumbed to his injuries in Bahadurgarh. These tragic events have prompted public outrage, with opposition parties criticising the BJP-led government for neglecting sports infrastructure. *—PTI*

## INDIA'S NAVAL PRESENCE

India's first indigenous aircraft carrier INS Vikrant and stealth frigate INS Udaygiri arrive in Colombo on Thursday for the International Fleet Review 2025 to mark the 75th anniversary of Sri Lanka Navy. Sri Lanka welcomed both vessels with full naval honours, highlighting deepening India–Sri Lanka ties PHOTO: SRI LANKA NAVY

## INDIAN DISTRICTS VULNERABLE

# *Climate-hit kids 25% more underweight*

**NEW DELHI, 27 NOV**

A new study has found that children living in India's climate-vulnerable districts are significantly more likely to be underweight, underscoring how rising climate risks are already shaping public health outcomes.

Published in the journal PLOS One, the study reports that children in highly vulnerable districts face a 25 per cent higher likelihood of being underweight compared to those in less affected areas. The researchers also found that these districts consistently lag behind on key health metrics, including stunting, wasting and access to healthcare.

Researchers from Delhi's Institute of Economic Growth noted that nearly 80 per cent of India's population lives in regions exposed to extreme weather events such as floods, cyclones and heatwaves, making climate vulnerability a major barrier to achieving several Sustainable Development Goals. Using data from the National Family Health Survey-5 and climate-risk assessments from the Central Research Institute for Dryland Agriculture, the team examined how climate exposure correlates with health indicators across districts.

The findings highlight the need for policymakers to consider climatic factors alongside socio-economic when planning health interventions PHOTO: AI

The study found a 38 per cent higher likelihood of non-institutional deliveries in climate-vulnerable districts, with women more likely to give birth outside healthcare facilities. The chances of wasting and stunting were also six per cent and 14 per cent higher, respectively, in these districts.

The authors said the findings highlight the need for policymakers to consider climate vulnerability alongside socio-economic factors when planning health interventions. Strengthening resilience in local healthcare systems is critical to sustaining well-being. *—PTI*

## CRACKDOWN ON TERROR

# J&K police inspect mosques

**SRINAGAR, 27 NOV**

Police intensified coordinated operations across Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday as part of ongoing efforts to dismantle terror networks, identify radicalisation channels and track suspicious financial activity.

In Srinagar, police conducted inspections at madrassas and mosques across all zones, accompanied by executive magistrates and independent witnesses. Officials said the checks were part of a broader crackdown launched after the 10 November car blast near Delhi's Red Fort and the busting of a "white-collar" terror module.

Two preachers, Molvi Irfan of Shopian and Molvi Ishtiaq of Haryana's Mewat, have already been arrested.

Search teams examined digital devices, documents and other material to identify any links to radical or unlawful activity.

Parallel raids were carried out across Anantnag, Pulwama, Budgam, Kulgam and Kupwara targeting locations associated with banned outfit Jamaat-e-Islami.

Electronic devices, literature and documents were seized for scrutiny, including during searches at the Jamia Islamia Institute in Handwara.

In Jammu, a 19-year-old youth from Reasi district was arrested under Section 113(3) of the Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita after investigations indicated online radicalisation and alleged contacts with Pakistan-based numbers. His digital devices are being analysed.

In Maharashtra's Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, police arrested a 45-year-old woman for staying in a hotel for six months on forged documents.

Investigators found international numbers, foreign contacts and unexplained deposits exceeding Rs 32 lakh in her account. Notices have been issued to 13 individuals who transferred funds to her.

A case has been registered under cheating and forgery provisions. *—PTI*

Jasir Bilal Wani, accused in the Delhi blast case, being produced at the Patiala House Court, in New Delhi, on Thursday PHOTO: PTI

# Delhi blast: Wani sent to NIA custody

**NEW DELHI, 27 NOV**

A Delhi court on Thursday remanded Red Fort blast accused Jasir Bilal Wani to seven days' custody with the National Investigation Agency.

Wani, a Qazigund resident from Anantnag, Jammu and Kashmir, was arrested in Srinagar on 17 November for allegedly providing technical support to the terror module, including modifying drones and attempting to assemble rockets ahead of the 10 November blast. His earlier 10-day remand, granted on 18 November, ended Thursday.

Earlier, the court on Wednesday sent Soyab, a Faridabad resident accused of harbouring alleged bomber Umar-un Nabi, to 10 days' NIA custody. Soyab was arrested from Dhauj in Haryana and produced at Patiala House Courts amid tight security. Another key accused, Amir Rashid Ali, had his custodial remand extended by seven days. Soyab is the seventh accused in the case linked to a "white-collar" terror module busted by the Jammu and Kashmir Police. The NIA continues to follow multiple leads, coordinating searches across states to identify other suspects involved in the 10 November suicide bombing. *—PTI*

## Offline classes resume as Delhi lifts GRAP-3 curbs

**NEW DELHI, 27 NOV**

Offline classes resumed across Delhi on Thursday after the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) lifted Stage-3 restrictions of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP), following a three-day improvement in air quality.

The measures, which had been imposed due to rising pollution levels earlier this month, were revoked on Wednesday.

In a circular, the Directorate of Education (DoE) announced that guidelines for hybrid classes for students up to Year 5 were now withdrawn, stating, "All classes are to be held in physical mode with immediate effect."

School heads have been instructed to inform students, staff, and parents of this change.

However, Delhi's air quality remains in the "very poor" category, with an AQI of 377 recorded by the Central Pollution Control Board at 4pm on Thursday.

The Supreme Court is set to hear a plea regarding the deteriorating air quality in Delhi-NCR on 3 December. The Chief Justice Surya Kant noted that the situation is no less than a"health emergency." *—PTI*

## TENDER LOVING CARE

Local women in a village near the Wildlife SOS Elephant Conservation and Care Centre in UP's Mathura are hand-knitting giant, colourful sweaters and blankets to protect 21 rescued elephants from near-freezing winter temperatures. Many of the elephants, previously abused or neglected, are vulnerable to pneumonia and arthritis. Each 4kg sweater, crocheted over three to four weeks, covers the animals' backs, necks and legs. The initiative not only shields the elephants from the cold but also provides livelihood support to local families
***PHOTO: SCREENGRAB***

# Political will missing to fix climate crisis: Expert

Noting India's dependence on fossil fuels, Rafalowicz told PTI that the first step in addressing any dependency is acknowledging it and committing to move beyond, even without every pathway detail in place ***PHOTO: FREEPIX***

**COP30 FALLOUT**

The climate crisis will hit the poorest and the most marginalised the hardest, including those in India and other developing nations, said a top representative of a global campaign advocating for a new international treaty to manage the phasing out of fossil fuels.

In terms of the formal agreements reached at COP30, "we are still drastically off track" in confronting the climate crisis, Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty director Alex Rafalowicz said, while focussing attention on people who have contributed the least to the problem and have the least resilience to rising temperatures.

"To stop the acceleration of these disasters, we need a genuine plan to phase out fossil fuels and to end deforestation. COP30 did neither. So, at the highest level, we must be honest, we are off track," Rafalowicz said.

The United Nations climate talks in Brazil reached a subdued agreement recently that pledged more funding for countries to adapt to the wrath of extreme weather.

But the catch-all agreement does not include explicit details to phase out fossil fuels or strengthen countries' inadequate emission cutting plans, which dozens of nations demanded.

Noting India's dependence on fossil fuels, Rafalowicz told PTI that the first step in addressing any dependency is acknowledging it and committing to move beyond, even without every pathway detail in place.

"We can discuss a reasonable pathway that ensures continued access to energy, especially for people who currently lack it, and that ensures just transition plans for workers in fossil fuel sectors. This is precisely the conversation Colombia and the Netherlands want to begin. India, given its ambition for renewable energy, would be very welcome," the director of the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty initiative told PTI.

When asked what factors influenced the absence of a fossil fuel language in the global Mutirão text at the UN climate talks, Rafalowicz emphasised that political will, public pressure, and lobbying, all influenced COP negotiations.

He also cited the UK's shift to support the just transition mechanism after sustained public and trade union pressure as an example of how governments positions can change, and stressed that coal, oil, and gas remain the main sources of carbon dioxide emissions -- framing the climate challenge as a fossil-fuel crisis.

"We must acknowledge the huge number of industry lobbyists at these conferences. One in 25 attendees represented fossil fuel-related industries or corporations. Their interest is to limit action. Eighty-six per cent of the cardon dioxide trapped in our atmosphere over the past decade has come from coal, oil and gas. If we cannot address these three products, we cannot address the climate crisis. It is fundamentally a fossil fuel crisis," he said.

Highlighting that fossil fuels have never delivered sustainable development, Rafalowicz expressed concerns over the destruction of ecological limits and fossil fuels causing significant harm, from polluted city air to Amazon oil spills and escalation of other climate impacts.

When asked if nations who are major producers of fossil fuels can derail their goals, he said, "They can try, and they can slow progress, but they cannot derail the transition that is already underway. Renewable energy installation is almost surpassing annual increases in demand."

Electric vehicles are rapidly replacing petrol vehicles, and oil consumption is expected to decline quickly, he added.

Rafalowicz further said the central questions are whether the transition can be made quickly enough to avert severe climate impacts and whether it can be achieved fairly.

He warned that leaving the shift entirely to market forces would allow "powerful players" to gain the most, resulting in a slow and inequitable transition that would not serve India's interests or those of many other countries.

Such an approach, he added, may benefit elites in the United States, Saudi Arabia or Russia, but not the majority of people.

Speaking about Colombia and the Netherlands co-hosting first international conference on the just transition away from fossil fuels, Rafalowicz said that the event was announced alongside about 24 countries during COP30, and 15 other countries meet the criteria of having a strong vision for getting off fossil fuels.

"I expect around 40 countries from every continent. Colombia envisions technical dialogues to develop best practices for overcoming fossil fuel dependence and to propose changes to the international system to accelerate the transition," he said.

This includes discussions on new legal avenues, the International Court of Justice's decision, the COP Presidency's roadmap on phasing out fossil fuels, and the possibility of establishing a new treaty focused specifically on fossil fuels. The first international conference on the just transition away from fossil fuels is slated to be held on 28 and 29 April in 2026, in the port city of Santa Marta, Colombia. *—PTI*

# SALAR

## H5N5's 1st human death: How worried should we be?

H5N1 bird flu has infected growing numbers of people worldwide in recent years, but this week saw something new: the first recorded human case of an H5N5 avian influenza virus. What is this virus and how concerned about it should we be?

- H5N5 is found in wild birds around the world, and it is relatively common for it to pass from them into flocks of poultry. This is, however, the first time an H5N5 influenza virus has been found to go one step further and infect a human. Influenza A viruses are one of the major branches of the influenza virus family, and are divided into subtypes.

**What happened?**

In early November, a resident of Grays Harbor, a county on the south-west Pacific coast of Washington state about 100 miles from Seattle, became severely unwell with flu-like symptoms including high fever, respiratory distress and confusion.

They were admitted to hospital, and on November 14 officials confirmed that tests showed infection with an H5N5 avian influenza virus. The patient, an older adult with underlying conditions, was treated in hospital, but sadly they died on 21 November.

This was the first reported human infection with an H5N5 influenza virus.

**WHAT IS H5N5 INFLUENZA VIRUS?**

H5N5 influenza viruses are a type of avian influenza (bird flu) – an influenza A virus that infects birds.

Bird flu viruses are classified as either "high pathogenicity" or "low pathogenicity" based on the severity of symptoms they cause in poultry. (Their severity also varies in other bird species.) This H5N5 strain, like the widespread and much-reported-on H5N1 strain, is one of the high pathogenicity forms.

**WHERE DID IT COME FROM?**

This hasn't yet been formally confirmed. However, the patient kept a flock of backyard poultry that were exposed to wild birds, which suggests how they might have caught the virus.

H5N5 is found in wild birds around the world, and it is relatively common for it to pass from them into flocks of poultry. This is, however, the first time an H5N5 influenza virus has been found to go one step further and infect a human.

**IS IT SIMILAR TO H5N1?**

Influenza A viruses are one of the major branches of the influenza virus family, and are divided into subtypes based on differences in the two proteins that form spikes on the surface of virus particles: haemagglutinin (HA) and neuraminidase (NA).

Both proteins are good targets for the immune system's antibodies. The proteins rapidly mutate as the virus evolves to evade these antibodies, and the different forms that result are used to categorise influenza A viruses.

The bird flu viruses H5N1 and H5N5 both have HA proteins of the same H5 subtype (though recognisably distinct from each other), but have NA proteins of different subtypes.

Just as humans can be infected by different influenza A virus subtypes during the same winter season (H1N1 and H3N2), genetic studies show us this H5N5 virus is distinct from the dominant H5N1 strain that is also circulating in birds worldwide.

**SHOULD WE BE WORRIED?**

H5N5 is an ecological and agricultural threat. Although bird flu vaccines exist, at the moment, political and economic factors make it hard to use them in US poultry.

Instead, the virus must be controlled by surveillance, housing poultry indoors, increasing farm biosecurity and, as a last resort, by mass culling of infected poultry.

This is challenging enough, but bird flu also demands our attention because the virus is a potential cause of new pandemics.

In the long run, this risk is very significant. However, it is worth remembering that, although influenza is better at changing its host species and creating pandemics than any other virus, that is still an incredibly hard thing for the virus to do.

The vast majority of "spillover" infections of bird flu into humans are one-off events. They can vary unpredictably in their effects. Most are quite mild (for example, causing conjunctivitis), but some can be very severe, as was the case in this first recorded case of H5N5. But after infecting one human, most avian influenza viruses go no further.

Scientists will watch for several warning signs that a virus may be adapting to humans, especially any hint of person-to-person spread. There is no sign that this has happened here. At the moment, the wider risk to humans from H5N5 is still low, and there is no reason to think this was anything other than a tragic one-off case. However, there will be plenty of opportunities for influenza viruses to try again. As H5N5 and other subtypes of avian influenza virus continue to circulate, it is important we continue to monitor this virus carefully. *—PTI*

**LETTERS** write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

# *Race to seize frozen Russian assets pits EU against Trump*

The EU has sent Ukraine almost $197 billion since Russia invaded Ukraine nearly four years ago ***PHOTO: FREEPIK***

- The funds are central to European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's plan to both maintain pressure on Russia and increase support for Ukraine.

Money is as central to Europe's vital support of Ukraine as ammunition and intelligence. Yet, the bloc's most viable funding mechanism involves seizing billions of dollars' worth of Russian assets that US President Donald Trump has proposed taking over.

The first draft of Trump's 28-point peace plan called for an investment scheme for Ukraine's reconstruction controlled by the US but financed by USD 100 billion in frozen Russian assets matched by another USD 100 billion from the European Union — with 50 per cent of profits sent back to Washington.

The plan surprised Europeans, who have spent years fiercely debating the fate of Russia's frozen fortune.

Those funds are central to European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's plan to both maintain pressure on Russia and increase support for Ukraine as mysterious drone incursions and sabotage operations rattle European capitals.

"I cannot see any scenario in which the European taxpayers alone will pay the bill," she said Wednesday in Strasbourg, France, to applause from lawmakers in the European Parliament.

The 27-nation EU has sent Ukraine almost USD 197 billion since Russia invaded Ukraine nearly four years ago. While there's no consensus on how to provide more aid, there's near unanimity on seizing the Russian assets to cover the estimated USD 153 billion for Ukraine's budget and military needs for 2026 and 2027.

The Commission has proposed paying that bill with joint debt taken on by the EU and grants by individual nations, but its main source is the USD 225 billion assets frozen at Euroclear, a Brussels-based financial institution.

That is, if the Trump administration doesn't get them first.

**PERKS OF THE DEAL**

Trump's brash negotiating style left many in Europe suspecting he wants a quick deal that forces Europeans to make it work and pay for it. All while the US profits.

Analysts say the proposal was essentially a US attempt to snatch these assets, coming as Brussels and Washington relaunch trade negotiations over tariffs.

Agathe Demarais, a senior fellow at the Berlin-based European Council on Foreign Relations, said the proposal was akin to a "signing bonus" for a peace deal heavily slanted towards Russia.

Fabian Zuleeg, chief executive of the Brussels-based European Policy Centre, called the US takeover of the assets "outrageous," but suggested it might also be acceptable to Europeans "if that is ultimately the price to pay for a good deal."

After intense discussions between the US, Germany, France, the United Kingdom and representatives from the European Commission, the investment scheme was removed from the new draft peace plan. Russia has already signalled its total rejection of the new draft.

**THE ASSETS FROZEN IN BELGIUM**

A quick seizure of Russia's frozen assets by the EU would not only secure Ukraine's defence budget, but also empower Brussels at the negotiation table, Demarais said.

"If the EU rushes to seize Russia's central bank assets before Washington grabs them, the bloc may be able to drastically curb Trump's interest in a bad deal," she said.

The European Commission has proposed taking direct ownership of the assets. Under von der Leyen's leadership, it could then issue a loan to Ukraine, which would be repaid only if Moscow provides war reparations to Kyiv.

The bulk of these assets are held in a clearinghouse called Euroclear in Belgium. However, Belgian Prime Minister Bart De Wever has refused to approve their use as collateral for a massive loan for Ukraine, citing fears that Russia would retaliate against Belgian interests.

"We are a small country, and retaliation could be very hard," De Wever said in October.

Yet the Belgian position on thawing the assets was influenced by an impasse in local politics over deep federal debt. After months of domestic political wrangling ended last week in a deal, politicians from Riga to Lisbon started hoping that De Wever would be able to lift his objections to seizing Russian assets.

Sweden's Foreign Minister Maria Malmer Stenergard said after the Brussels meeting on Wednesday "the clock is ticking" and that seizing the assets was "the only realistic financing option that would make a real difference and one that would be most fair to taxpayers" in Europe.

Kaja Kallas, the EU's top diplomat said Wednesday there is now broad EU support for Belgium.

"It would send the strongest message to Moscow that it cannot wait us out, and we need to make this decision fast," said Kallas.

On 18 December, De Wever will join the other EU national leaders for a summit in Brussels over, among other subjects, seizing the Russian assets. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

## Dominican Republic lets US fight drug menace

SAN JUAN, 27 NOV

The Dominican Republic's President Luis Abinader has authorised the US government to operate in restricted areas to combat drug trafficking. This agreement, announced alongside US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth in Santo Domingo, allows for US aircraft to refuel and transport personnel at San Isidro Air Base and Las Américas International Airport for a limited time. Hegseth praised the Dominican Republic as a regional leader in addressing narcotics, stating, "The Dominican Republic has stepped up." The agreement aims to enhance air and maritime security, with KC-135 tankers and C-130 Hercules aircraft involved in monitoring and support efforts. Abinader highlighted the severity of the drug trafficking threat, asserting, "No country can or should confront it without allies." —*PTI*

## Guinea-Bissau military announces new Junta leader

BISSAU, 27 NOV

Following a coup, soldiers in Guinea-Bissau have declared General Horta N'Ta as the new leader of the military government during a one-year transition. This announcement was made on state television after General Horta N'Ta, a close ally of ousted President Umaro Sissoco Embaló, took control following the disputed presidential election. Embaló, who claimed he was arrested amid tense gunfire near the presidential palace, remains unaccounted for. Opposition claims that the coup was fabricated to manipulate election results, with rival Fernando Dias asserting, "Umaro lost the elections...he fabricated a coup d'état." The military cited plans to alter electoral results as justification for their takeover, prompting international condemnation. —*PTI*

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

## France starts voluntary military service for 18-19

VARCES, 27 NOV

President Emmanuel Macron has announced the launch of a new 10-month voluntary military service programme for young people aged 18 to 19, set to begin next summer. Speaking at the Varces military base in the French Alps, Macron stated, "In this uncertain world where power prevails over law...our nation has no right to fear, panic, unpreparedness, or division." The initiative aims to increase military personnel amid rising concerns over Russia's aggression in Europe. Initially, 3,000 volunteers will be selected, with plans to expand to 10,000 annually by 2030 and possibly reach 50,000 by 2035. Volunteers will serve domestically and receive military status, wages, and training. —*PTI*

Emergency personnel gather in a cordoned off area where National Guard soldiers were shot near the White House on Wednesday, in Washington PHOTO: PTI

# 2 Nat'l Guards shot at near White House

## Trump suspends visa requests from Afghan

WASHINGTON, 27 NOV

Two West Virginia National Guard members who deployed to Washing DC were shot at just blocks from the White House in a brazen act of violence that the Mayor described as a targeted attack.

FBI Director Kash Patel and Washington Mayor Muriel Bowser said the injured were hospitalised in critical condition.

A suspect who was in custody also was shot and had wounds that were not believed to be life-threatening, according to a law enforcement official. Authorities said that the suspect ambushed three guards near a metro station two blocks from the White House.

The 29-year-old suspect, **Rahmanullah Lakanwal** an Afghan national, entered the US in 2021 through Operation Allies Welcome, a Biden administration programme that evacuated and resettled tens of thousands of Afghans after the US withdrawal from the country, officials said.

The initiative brought roughly 76,000 people to the US, many of whom had worked alongside US troops and diplomats as interpreters and translators. It has since faced intense scrutiny from US President Donald Trump and his allies, even as advocates say it offered a lifeline to people at risk of Taliban reprisals.

Lakanwal has been living in Washington state with his wife and five children. His motive remains unclear.

In a video message, Trump called for the reinvestigation of all Afghan refugees who entered under the Biden administration. He also suspended new visa requests from Kabul.

"If they can't love our country, we don't want them," he said, adding that the shooting was "a crime against our entire nation."

The Trump administration quickly ordered 500 more National Guard members to Washington. Nearly 2,200 troops currently are active in the city. —*PTI*

### ICE detains Karoline Leavitt's nephew's mother

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) authorities have detained the mother of White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt's nephew and are in the process of deporting her. ICE arrested Bruna Ferreira, a Brazilian citizen, this month. Officials say Ferreira entered the US on a tourist visa that expired in 1999. Ferreira has a child with Leavitt's brother. The child lives with Leavitt's brother.

### Trump disinvites S Africa from 2026 G20 in Florida

South Africa will not receive an invitation to attend the G20 Summit to be hosted under the US Presidency in Florida next year, Trump said. He described the country as not being "worthy" of membership anywhere. "The South African Government refuses to acknowledge or address the horrific human right abuses endured by Afrikaners, and other descendants of Dutch, French, and German settlers," Trump said on Truth Social on Wednesday.

### 'Don asked Japan PM to soften stance on Taiwan'

Trump urged Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi during a recent phone conversation to avoid heightening tensions with China over Taiwan, American and Japanese press reported. The discussion came as Tokyo-Beijing ties worsened after Takaichi's suggested that a Chinese attack on Taiwan could require Japan's defence forces to act. Trump reportedly didn't pressure Takaichi to walk back her comments, but said the she should soften her tone on Taiwan, Kyodo News and The Wall Street Journal reported.

Birds fly over the burned buildings at Wang Fuk Court, a residential estate in the Tai Po district of Hong Kong's New Territories PHOTO: PTI

# Hong Kong high rise inferno toll rises to 75

HONG KONG, 27 NOV

The death toll in Hong Kong's devastating apartment building fire has risen to at least 75, the city's fire department said Thursday.

At least 123 people were injured in the blaze, including eight firefighters. Among the dead were 51 who died at the scene and four who died in hospital.

The fire department did not give an update on how many people remain missing after the blaze. Earlier, officials had said 279 people were unaccounted for.

The housing estate, Wang Fuk Court, had a larger population of elderly residents than many Hong Kong housing estates. Roughly 36 per cent of residents were 65 or older, according to Centaline Property Agency. The median age of the tenants at Wang Fuk Court was 56.

Officials are investigating "potential corruption" linked to renovations at Wang Fuk Court.

The Independent Commission Against Corruption, Hong Kong's statutory anti-graft body, announced on Thursday that it had set up a dedicated task force.

The fire spread in an "unusual" manner, other officials said, and a criminal investigation has been launched, Security Secretary Chris Tang said.

Hong Kong Police said they arrested three men, two directors and a consultant of a construction company, on suspicion of manslaughter, and accused them of "gross negligence." Authorities suspect that the fire spread because of substandard foam and bamboo scaffolding. —*Agencies*

● Thick smoke poured out of some of some of the high-rises in the Wang Fuk Court complex in Hong Kong. Flames could be seen inside the building on Thursday evening

# FDA flags lead in Indian cookware

NEW DELHI, 27 NOV

The US Food & Drug Administration (FDA) has warned retailers and consumers that 19 types of cookware, 16 of them manufactured in India, may leach dangerous levels of lead.

The products, often marketed as Hindalium/Hindolium or Indalium/Indolium, are made from aluminium, aluminium alloys and brass. FDA testing found several utensils released significant quantities of lead into food during cooking or storage. Studies show many such items contain over 100 parts per million (ppm) of lead, with leaching levels exceeding recommended dietary limits and FDA standards.

Consumers have been urged to inspect their cookware and discard any suspect items immediately. Lead exposure

can lead to abdominal pain, nausea and memory loss, and poses heightened risks to women of childbearing age and breastfeeding mothers.

The affected cookware has been sold in US states including California, Illinois and New York.

Manufacturers and distributors linked to the contaminated products include Kraftwares (India) Ltd. in Mumbai, whose Brass Tope listings and Aluminum Kadai were recalled on 19 November, and New Delhi-based JSM Foods, which withdrew its IKM Aluminum Saucepan and IKM 4-Quart Pital Brass Pot the same day. In the US, Punjab Supermarket & Halal Meats recalled multiple Silver Horse aluminium items and the Chef Milk Pan. Indian Cookware & Appliance LLC initiated a recall of its Aluminum Hammered Kadai Size 7 on 17 October. New Reliance Traders, Inc. was notified after its Royal Kitchen Cookware Milk Pan exceeded limits. —*PTI*

**IRAQ OIL FIELD BURNS**

A drone strike on Iraq's Khor Mor Oil and Gas Field forced operations to shut late on Wednesday. The strike has cut power to much of the Kurdish region of northern Iraq. Several gas storage tanks were struck, resulting in an explosion and large fire that injured several workers PHOTO: X @sentdefender

## Myanmar political prisoners released in mass amnesty

BANGKOK, 27 NOV

Excited families greeted relatives released from Myanmar's Insein Prison on Thursday as part of a mass amnesty granted by the country's military rulers ahead of next month's election.

At least eight buses carrying prisoners were welcomed outside the gate of the Yangon prison by relatives and friends who had been waiting since early morning.

The military administration granted amnesty to more than 3,000 people locked up for opposing army rule and dropped charges against more than 5,500 others to allow eligible voters to participate in the 28 December elections.

There was no sign that the prisoner release would include former leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who led the National League for Democracy government ousted in the military takeover in 2021. Among those freed were Kyi Toe, a member of NLD's central information committee, and freelance journalist Zaw Lin Htut, also known as Phoe Thar. Both were arrested in 2021.

Conditional release was granted to 724 prisoners, while 5,580 people will receive amnesty. —*PTI*

# Bangladesh court sentences Hasina to 21 years in jail

DHAKA, 27 NOV

A Dhaka court on Thursday sentenced ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina to 21 years imprisonment and her two children to five years each for alleged irregularities in the allocation of plots under a government housing project after their trial in absentia.

Dhaka Special Judge Court-5 handed down the sentences to 78-year-old Hasina, her son Sajib Wajed Joy and daughter Saima Wazed Putul in three cases over corruption charges in the government housing project at Purbachal near here.

"The plot was allotted to Sheikh Hasina in a manner that exceeded the legally authorised jurisdiction," Judge Mohammad Abdullah Al Mamun said.

Hasina was sentenced to seven years in each of the three cases involving the alleged allocation.

Apart from the Hasina family, 20 others, including former junior minister for housing Sharif Ahmed and officials of the housing ministry and Rajdhani Unyan Kartripakkah, were tried in the cases, and all except one were sentenced to jail.

The man who was acquitted is a junior officer of the ministry. Only one accused faced trial in person, and he was sentenced to three years.

Hasina has been living in India since she fled Bangladesh on 5 August last year in the face of the massive protests that toppled her Awami League government. She was earlier declared a fugitive by a court.

Bangladesh has requested India to extradite the fugitive. Foreign Affairs Adviser M Touhid Hossain noted the judicial process is completed.

India on Wednesday said it is examining the interim government's request to extradite Hasina and asserted that it is committed to ensuring the best interests of the people of that country. —*PTI*

**ASIAN STORMS**

# *Floods kill 40 in SL, 41 in Indonesia & 80 in Thailand*

COLOMBO/MEDAN, 27 NOV

Torrential rains, floods and landslides have left 40 people dead in Sri Lanka with nearly 4,000 people affected in the last 11 days, as the island nation grapples with one of its worst weather-related crises. Meanwhile, 49 people were killed and 67 were missing in rains and floods in Indonesia. The death toll in the Thailand flood rose to 80.

**SRI LANKA**

Sri Lanka's Disaster Management Centre said on Thursday that 18 deaths were reported from the central hill districts alone due to landslides.

According to the weather bureau, the island's southeast periphery had developed a low-pressure situation, which had developed "into a depression and is centred 210 km southeast of Batticaloa. It is very likely to move northwestwards and intensify further into a deep depression during the next 12 hours."

Very heavy rainfalls above 200mm are likely to hit several parts of the island, it said.

Houses are submerged by floods in Songkhla province, southern Thailand on Wednesday PHOTO: PTI

**INDONESIA**

Rescuers searched in rivers and the rubble of villages for bodies, and possible survivors, after flash floods and landslides on Indonesia's Sumatra island left 49 people dead and 67 missing.

More downpours were forecast for North Sumatra province and extreme rainfall will continue until next week, Indonesia's Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysics Agency said. It recommended weather modification to reduce rain. Cloud seeding would be likely done.

**THAILAND**

The death toll for the Thailand floods rose to 80, as floodwaters began to subside. About 1 million households and 3 million people have been impacted in the storms that began last weekend. —*Agencies*

# Pak jail says Imran is alive, PTI says show proof

ISLAMABAD, 27 NOV

Pakistan's former prime minister Imran Khan is in "completely good health inside Adiala Jail", the jail authorities said on Thursday, rejecting rumours on social media about his medical condition.

"The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leadership has been informed regarding Imran Khan's health. All necessary care is being provided to the PTI chief," the Adiala Jail administration said in a statement.

Khan, 73, has been in jail since August 2023 in multiple cases.

However, the PTI asked the Pakistani government to provide substantial proof. It noted that Imran's sisters had been repeatedly denied meeting him at Adiala Jail. PTI questioned his whereabouts and staged sit-ins outside the facility.

However, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said, "Imran himself has a TV in his jail cell ... and his food comes from outside." Asif alleged that Imran had "a double bed and velvet bedding," likening the treatment to a five-star hotel. —*Agencies*

PHOTO: X

## Gold declines by Rs 640, silver surges by Rs 5,100

MUMBAI, 27 NOV

Gold prices declined by Rs 640 to Rs 1,29,460 per 10 grams in here on Thursday due to poor purchase by stockists amid weak global trends, the All India Sarafa Association said. The price of gold of 99.5 per cent purity decreased by Rs 640 to Rs 1,28,860 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes). "Easing geopolitical tensions prompted some profit-taking," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst, Commodities, at HDFC Securities, said. However, silver surged by Rs 5,100 to Rs 1,68,200 per kilogram. Silver rose by Rs 13,200 in the last three sessions from Rs 1,55,000 per kg on Monday. On the global front, spot gold slipped by USD 5.60, or 0.13 per cent, to USD 4,158.38 per ounce on Thursday.—*PTI*

## Rupee falls by 8 paise to close at 89.30

MUMBAI, 27 NOV

The Indian rupee depreciated by 8 paise, closing at 89.30 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, influenced by a stronger greenback bolstered by demand from importers and banks. Despite this decline, forex experts noted support for the rupee from foreign capital inflows into the domestic stock markets and a drop in crude oil prices. The rupee opened at 89.19 and hit an intra-day low of 89.40 before settling at 89.30, marking a loss from Wednesday's close of 89.22. The dollar index rose by 0.11 per cent to 99.63. Brent crude fell slightly to USD 63.11 per barrel. Foreign institutional investors net-bought equities worth Rs 4,778.03 crore on Wednesday—*PTI*

## Tata Power to invest Rs 10,000cr in Odisha

BHUBANESWAR, 27 NOV

Tata Power Company Ltd announced on Thursday that it plans to set up a 10-GW ingot and wafer manufacturing facility in Odisha, with an estimated investment of Rs 10,000 crore. According to the company, ingots and wafers are vital raw materials used in producing solar cells and modules, as well as semiconductor chips. Tata Power currently operates 4.55 GW of solar cell and module manufacturing capacity. By adding ingot and wafer production, the company aims to achieve backward integration, strengthening its solar panel supply chain for both domestic consumption and export markets. The company is assessing two possible locations for the new facility, Gopalpur in Ganjam and Cuttack. Both sites offer close access to a port.—*PTI*

## PPSL to operate as payment aggregator

NEW DELHI, 27 NOV

Fintech firm One97 Communications said its subsidiary, Paytm Payments Services Limited, has received the RBI permit after a long wait to operate as a payment aggregator. The Reserve Bank of India granted in-principle approval to Paytm Payments Services Limited in August to operate as an online payment aggregator. "...Reserve Bank of India on November 26, 2025, has granted Certificate of Authorization (COA) to Paytm Payments Services Limited (PPSL)...to operate as a Payment Aggregator under the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007," One97 Communications said in a regulatory filing. The banking regulator had removed restrictions from Paytm Payments Services Limited on onboarding new merchants, which were imposed on the company on 25 November, 2022.—*PTI*

# Sensex, Nifty fall after after hitting record highs

### Bajaj Finance, ICICI gains; Maruti, Eternal are laggards

MUMBAI, 27 NOV

Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty scaled fresh lifetime highs in intra-day trade on Thursday before paring some gains to close marginally higher amid positive global trends on growing hopes of a US Fed rate cut and foreign fund inflows.

Rising for the second day, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 110.87 points or 0.13 per cent to settle at 85,720.38. During the day, it hit a record high of 86,055.86, reflecting a jump of 446.35 points or 0.52 per cent. However, profit-taking by investors in the second half dragged the index from record high levels.

The earlier lifetime high of the benchmark was 85,978.25, hit on 27 September, 2024.

The 50-share NSE Nifty ended marginally higher by 10.25 points or 0.04 per cent at 26,215.55. During the day, the benchmark rallied 105.15 points or 0.40 per cent to hit an all-time high of 26,310.45. The broader index had earlier scaled its record intra-day high of 26,277.35 on September 27, 2024.

The earlier lifetime high of the benchmark was 85,978,25, which hit on 27 September, 2024 PHOTO: X

Among Sensex firms, Bajaj Finance, ICICI Bank, Hindustan Unilever, Bajaj Finserv, HCL Tech and HDFC Bank were the major gainers. However, Maruti, Eternal, UltraTech Cement and State Bank of India were among the laggards.

"Indian markets steadied after a volatile session where both the Nifty and Sensex briefly touched record highs before profit booking ensued," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Ltd, said.

- Rising for the second day, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 110.87 points or 0.13 per cent to settle at 85,720.38. It hit a record high of 86,055.86, reflecting a jump of 446.35 points.

Foreign Institutional Investors bought equities worth Rs 4,778.03 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data. Domestic Institutional Investors also purchased stocks worth Rs 6,247.93 crore in the previous trade.Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, dipped 0.05 per cent to USD 63.10 per barrel. On Wednesday, the Sensex jumped 1,022.50 points 85,609.51. —*PTI*

FINANCE MINISTRY REPORT

# 'GST rate changes boost economy'

NEW DELHI, 27 NOV

The Indian economy is poised to maintain its growth momentum, bolstered by GST rate rationalisation that has significantly boosted consumption, according to a Finance Ministry report released on Thursday. The October Monthly Economic Review highlighted that easing inflationary pressures and recent tax reforms have enhanced household disposable incomes, leading to an optimistic near-term consumption outlook.

Retail inflation has dropped to an all-time low of 0.25 per cent in October 2025, down from 1.44 per cent in September, attributed largely to the complete effects of reduced GST rates, a favourable base effect, and declines in food inflation.

"The rationalisation of GST rates has provided a measurable boost to consumption," the report noted, citing an increase in high-frequency indicators such as higher e-way bill generation, record festive season automobile sales, and rising UPI transaction values. It stated that "the full impact of GST rationalisation on spending behaviour would become more evident over the next two quarters."

Effective from 22 September, GST rates were slashed on approximately 375 items, making everyday goods more affordable. The report forecasted a real GDP growth range of 7–7.5 per cent for Q2 FY26, emphasising stability amid global uncertainties and calling for structural reforms to enhance job creation.

The government's implementation of four Labour Codes is a significant move to modernise labour regulations, thereby improving workers' welfare. —*PTI*

# Sebi cancels 68 advisers over unpaid renewal fees

MUMBAI, 27 NOV

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) on Thursday cancelled the registration of 68 investment advisers for failing to pay their renewal fees.

Sebi's Designated Authority, Soma Majumder, said in the order that, under the Intermediaries Regulations, 2008, the certificates of registration of the 68 entities "is hereby cancelled." The list of affected advisers includes Truenorth Labs Pvt Ltd, Equity Mantra, Saurabh Mundra, Sheetal Agrawal, Ateet Hemant Wagh, Getbasis Securities and Technologies India Pvt Ltd, Lucid Technologies, and Avenue Venture Partners Investment Adviser LLP, among others.

Under Sebi's Investment Advisers (IA) rules, every registered adviser is required to pay a renewal fee every five years from the date of registration. Despite repeated reminders and multiple show-cause notices issued between February and June this year, these entities failed to comply.

Majumder noted that, as the certificates had already expired, their cancellation was necessary to prevent potential misuse or misleading of unsuspecting investors. "Since the certificates of registration of the notices have already expired, I find that the certificates of registration as Investment Adviser...should be cancelled under the Intermediaries Regulations, 2008," the order stated.

Sebi's move underscores its vigilance in ensuring that only compliant advisers operate in the market. —*PTI*

# SBI may not require equity for 6 years

NEW DELHI, 27 NOV

SBI Chairman CS Setty has announced that the bank will not require new equity capital for the next six years, following its successful Rs 25,000 crore equity raise through a qualified institutional placement (QIP) earlier this year. Setty stated that this move would support the bank's ambitious Rs 12 lakh crore credit growth and maintain a capital adequacy ratio (CRAR) of 15 per cent.

"Our long-term strategy is to maintain CRAR at 15 per cent and Common Equity Tier 1 (CET1) at 12 per cent," Setty told PTI. He added, "If the same profitability is maintained for another 5-6 years, we may not require any capital raising, at least on the CET1 part."

SBI also plans to raise Rs 12,500 crore through bonds to replace maturing papers, continuing its regular financing strategy. Additionally, Setty expressed confidence in achieving a 3 per cent net interest margin (NIM) despite potential Reserve Bank of India rate cuts, predicting a "shallow cut" of 0.25 per cent. —*PTI*

## Byju founder seeks $2.5B damage

NEW DELHI, 27 NOV

Byju's founder, Byju Raveendran, is set to file a $2.5 billion damages claim in a US court, refuting GLAS Trust's allegations that $533 million from the Alpha Funds was misappropriated by the company's founders.

A recent default ruling from a US bankruptcy court mandated Raveendran to pay over $1 billion, citing his failure to assist in locating part of a $1.2 billion term loan from 2021. Raveendran argued that he was not granted the 30 days requested to secure legal representation and vowed to appeal.

He asserted that the $533 million has been fully accounted for, primarily routed from OCI to Byju's entities, then to Think & Learn Pvt Ltd (TLPL), funding significant acquisitions, including Aakash Educational Services. In his statement, Raveendran declared, "GLAS Trust has attacked my integrity... The funds were used for TLPL's benefit and expansion."

He said he will present 'clinching evidence' in both the US and Indian courts, challenging GLAS' claims and seeking correction of what he describes as premature judgement. The evidence will be submitted as part of a full appeal against the order of the Delaware Insolvency Court and as part of the claim to be filed against relevant parties. —*PTI*

# India, UAE discuss gold imports, data sharing

NEW DELHI, 27 NOV

India and the United Arab Emirates have discussed key issues including market access, data sharing, gold import quotas, anti-dumping concerns, and services to further strengthen bilateral economic ties, the Commerce Ministry said on Thursday. These discussions took place during the meeting of the Joint Committee under the India–UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), which operates as a free trade agreement.

Both sides carried out a comprehensive review of progress under CEPA. Talks covered challenges related to market access, the allocation of the Gold Tariff Rate Quota (TRQ), data exchange, services, Rules of Origin, anti-dumping matters, and Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) licensing. India also briefed the UAE on its decision to allocate Gold TRQ through a transparent competitive bidding process.

The two nations further discussed deepening regulatory cooperation in the pharmaceutical sector, resolving issues linked to Certificates of Origin, and the early signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on food safety and technical requirements between India's APEDA and the UAE's Ministry of Climate Change and Environment. Bilateral trade surpassed USD 100 billion in 2024–25, up 19.6 per cent 2023-24. —*PTI*

# Govt approves Rs 300 crore scheme for textile research

NEW DELHI, 27 NOV

The Government of India has approved a new central sector scheme, 'Textiles Focused Research, Assessment, Monitoring, Planning and Start-up' (Tex-RAMPS), aimed at boosting research, innovation and competitiveness in the country's textiles sector. According to the Ministry of Textiles, the scheme has a total outlay of Rs 305 crore for 2025–26 to 2030–31 and will be fully funded by the ministry.

Announcing the initiative, Union Textiles Minister Giriraj Singh said Tex-RAMPS would integrate research, innovation and data-driven systems to strengthen India's textile value chain and help the country become a global leader in sustainability, technology and competitiveness.

The scheme will support advanced R&D in smart textiles, sustainable solutions, process improvements and emerging technologies, while developing strong data systems such as employment assessments, supply-chain mapping and an expanded India-Size study.

A real-time integrated data and analytics platform will aid policy decisions and sectorial monitoring. Tex-RAMPS will also back State-level planning, knowledge-sharing, start-up incubation and industry-academia collaboration, aiming to build a resilient and globally competitive textile ecosystem. —*ANI*

A real-time integrated data and analytics platform will aid policy decisions and sectorial monitoring PHOTO: PTI

- Announcing the initiative, Union Textiles Minister Giriraj Singh said Tex-RAMPS would integrate research, innovation and data-driven systems to strengthen India's textile value chain and help the country become a global leader in sustainability, technology and competitiveness.

PATENT APPLICATION FILED

# *IIT develops mosquito-proof detergent*

NEW DELHI, 27 NOV

A research team at IIT Delhi has developed innovative mosquito-repellent detergents that can keep mosquitoes away without compromising on wash-care properties.

These detergents are available in both powder and liquid forms and maintain comparable wash-care properties.

The research team, led by Professor Javed Nabibaksha Sheikh from the Department of Textile and Fibre Engineering, observed that commonly used mosquito-protection products -- such as liquids, coils, lotions, creams, roll-ons, sprays and patches -- often have limitations and do not provide consistent protection.

For instance, topical formulations like creams and lotions may lose their effectiveness over time, which can increase the risk of mosquito bites and the associated diseases.

"The products have been tested in a commercial laboratory and have proven effective at repelling mosquitoes," Sheikh said.

The testing involved a "hand-in-cage" method, where volunteers inserted their hands, covered with fabrics, into a box containing starved mosquitoes.

"The number of mosquitoes landing on the fabric was then evaluated. Fabrics washed with our detergents demonstrated a significant reduction in mosquito landings," Sheikh said.

Sheikh said they have filed a patent application for the detergents.

Since a mosquito's proboscis can easily penetrate fabric structure, it is crucial to deter them from landing on textiles. Textiles washed with these smart detergents become unattractive to mosquitoes, thus helping to prevent bites, a statement read.

The research team observed that the commonly used mosquito repellants often have limitations and do not offer consistent protection PHOTO: X

"The active components of detergents interact with fibres during the washing process, making them less attractive for mosquito landing. They work on both the smell and taste sensors of the mosquitoes," the professor said—*ANI*

# Whirlpool stock crashes after 11.8% stake sale

NEW DELHI, 27 NOV

The Whirlpool of India saw a large block trade on Thursday, with around 1.5 crore shares, roughly 11.8 per cent of the company's equity, changing hands. The company's stock crashed by 11.5 per cent on NSE and ended at Rs 1,062.3.

The identity of the buyers and sellers has not been disclosed, but market reports indicated that the company's promoters are the likely sellers. Details about pricing and final allocation for the 1.5-crore-share trade are expected once the exchanges release the block deal data.

The transaction comes after CNBC-TV18 reported that the promoter group is planning to sell 95 lakh shares, or a 7.5 per cent stake in the Whirlpool of India, via a block deal worth about Rs 965 crore at a floor price of Rs 1,030 per share.

- The identity of the buyers and sellers was not disclosed, but reports indicated that the company's promoters are the sellers. Details about pricing and allocation are expected.

Sources later indicated that the block size had been increased to around 11 per cent.

Whirlpool of India is owned by Whirlpool Mauritius, a subsidiary of the US-based Whirlpool Corporation. The promoter has reduced its stake in the Indian unit in the last two years. Promoter shareholding, which stood at around 75 per cent in 2023, has declined to about 51 per cent after large transactions in 2024 and 2025. —*PTI*

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

## Shorten IPL, play more Test: Gibbs tells India

**NEW DELHI, 27 NOV**

Former South African cricketer Herschelle Gibbs has urged India to shorten the Indian Premier League (IPL) and play more Test cricket to improve their performance. His remark followed India's 2-0 home Test series defeat to South Africa, the ICC World Test Championship holders, marking India's third Test series loss in 16 months under coach Gautam Gambhir. South Africa sealed the series with a massive 408-run win, their first in India since 2000, led by standout performances from spinner Simon Harmer and all-rounder Marco Jansen. Indian batters averaged only 15.23, the second-lowest in any series, and failed to score a single century a rare occurrence at home. —*ANI*

# Focus on domestic stars after SA loss

### Gaikwad, Patidar, Rinku emerge front runners for No. 3 spot, which is a sore spot for team

**NEW DELHI, 27 NOV**

India's series whitewash in South Africa is set to push the Ajit Agarkar-led selection panel towards reinstating specialists in key Test positions, particularly the crucial No. 3 slot long held by Rahul Dravid and Cheteshwar Pujara. With the position now wide open, neither Karun Nair, who failed to seal it in England, nor B Sai Sudharsan, averaging 27 from 11 innings, has staked a convincing claim. Sudharsan, in particular, is seen as a work in progress with technical flaws against spin that need ironing out at domestic and India A levels.

The selectors are now expected to revisit seasoned domestic performers to restore stability. While Sarfaraz Khan and Abhimanyu Easwaran remain out of favour, Ruturaj Gaikwad, Rajat Patidar and Rinku Singh are emerging as attractive options. Youngsters Smaran Ravichandran, with a first-class average of 78, and Yash Rathod, who scored 960 Ranji runs last season, have also put up prolific numbers in the middle order.

A former selector, familiar with selection dynamics, stressed that choices depend as much on the coach Gautam Gambhir and captain Shubman Gill as on the committee itself. He also argued it was time to abandon India's recent reliance on "non-existent all-rounders".

Kapil Dev, he said, was India's last world-class all-rounder, and Manoj Prabhakar the last genuinely competent Test option. Hardik Pandya's body "didn't permit", while Nitish Reddy, averaging 26 in 10 Tests and bowling just 86 overs in 15 innings, was described as a "bits-and-pieces" player suited only to T20s.

What India need now, the former selector said, is a hardened No 3 and a dependable No 5. Gaikwad, averaging 45-plus with strong Ranji form, fits the profile. Patidar, also averaging above 45 across 74 games, is nearing fitness after injury. Rinku Singh, with a first-class average near 60, remains another strong candidate. —*PTI*

India's head coach Gautam Gambhir and Kuldeep Yadav during the second Test cricket match between India and South Africa **PHOTO: PTI**

## We're sorry: Pant

**New Delhi, 27 Nov**

India's Test vice-captain Rishabh Pant has apologised for the team's shambolic performance in the 0-2 series loss to South Africa, asserting that the team will "regroup, refocus and reset" to come back stronger.

"There is no shying away from the fact that we didn't play good enough cricket over the last two weeks. As a team and as individuals, we always want to perform at the highest level and bring smiles to billions of Indians," Pant, who is personally drawing flak for his reckless shot selection during the series, said in a post on 'X'. — *PTI*

## 'Coach can only prep team, but players have to deliver'

**NEW DELHI, 27 NOV**

Former Indian cricket captain Sunil Gavaskar has come out in defence of Gautam Gambhir, saying the head coach can only prepare the team, and that it is the players who have to deliver on the field.

Gambhir has drawn heavy flak after the 408-run loss to South Africa in the second Test at Guwahati, which helped the visitors sweep the two-match series.

This was India's third Test series defeat under Gambhir. In the 16 months he has been at the helm, India lost to New Zealand at home 0-3, to Australia 1-3, and now to the Proteas.

Gavaskar added that Gambhir is the coach who helped India win the Champions Trophy and Asia Cup.

He cited the example of New Zealander Brendon McCullum, who is England's all-format coach, saying there was nothing wrong with Gambhir being the coach for all forms of the game.

Former Indian off-spinner R. Ashwin too has defended Gambhir, saying it is not appropriate to demand his sacking when players have not shouldered enough responsibility on the field.

Ashwin, who retired from international cricket as well as IPL, said he understands the need to pin responsibility given India's formidable home record in the past, but it is unfair to target only the coach and not ask questions about the players. – *PTI*

# Deepti is costliest buy at WPL auction

**NEW DELHI, 27 NOV**

Star India all-rounder Deepti Sharma emerged as the costliest buy of the 2026 WPL mega auction while other ODI World Cup standouts, Shree Charani and Laura Wolvaardt, also walked away with hefty pay cheques here on Thursday.

The seasoned Deepti expectedly fetched the big bucks with UP Warriorz using the Right to Match (RTM) card to retain the India all-rounder for a whopping Rs 3.20 crore. She is now the second-highest-paid Indian player in WPL history, just Rs 20 lakh behind Smriti Mandhana.

Mumbai Indians made one of the day's biggest moves by buying New Zealand all-rounder Amelia Kerr for Rs 3 crore. The 25-year-old was part MI's title winning runs in 2023 and 2025.

UP Warriorz surprisingly shelled out Rs 2.40 crore for the veteran India all-rounder Shikha Pandey, who last played for the national side in 2023.

Deepti Sharma and Shree Charani **PHOTO: X/@DEEPTI_SHARMA06, ICC**

Left-arm spinner Charani, a key performer in India's triumphant World Cup run, was snapped up by Delhi Capitals for Rs 1.30 crore, almost five times her base price of Rs 30 lakh, after an intense bidding battle with the Warriorz.

Delhi Capitals continued their aggressive approach, outbidding Royal Challengers Bengaluru to land South Africa captain Wolvaardt for Rs 1.10 crore and West Indian batter Chinelle Henry (Rs 1.30 crore) while also adding India all-rounder Sneh Rana for Rs 50 lakh.

The Warriorz, armed with the auction's largest purse of Rs 14.5 crore, were among the busiest franchises. Along with Deepti, they exercised RTM cards to bring back young pace sensation Kranti Gaud (Rs 50 lakh) and England's premier spinner Sophie Ecclestone (Rs 85 lakh).

They further bolstered their Indian core by signing Harleen Deol for her base price of Rs 50 lakh.

Gujarat Giants bagged India pacer Renuka Singh for Rs 60 lakh, while RCB picked up big-hitting South African finisher Nadine de Klerk (Rs 65 lakh) as well as India all-rounders Arundhati Reddy (Rs 75 lakh) and Radha Yadav (Rs 65 lakh).

The seasoned duo of Meg Lanning and Sophie Devine were also among the marquee picks. Giants bought Devine for Rs 2 crore, while UP Warriorz landed Lanning, who led Delhi Capitals to three finals, for Rs 1.90 crore after a fierce tussle with her former team DC. Warriorz also added rising Australian star Phoebe Litchfield for Rs 1.20 crore. —*PTI*

**BECKHAM IN ANDHRA**

England footballer David Beckham lit up Visakhapatnam on his second India visit, surprising students at a residential school in Visakhapatnam, under UNESCO's Global Education for All initiative. He played football with the students and later planted a tree with them **PHOTO: @ANDHRACOMMUNITY**

## 'VADODARA LIKELY TO HOST CWG CRICKET MATCHES IN 2030'

**NEW DELHI, 27 NOV**

Ahmedabad's neighbouring city of Vadodara could be in contention to co-host cricket matches during the 2030 Commonwealth Games, Indian Olympic Association (IOA) CEO Raghuram Iyer said on Thursday.

Ahmedabad was formally awarded hosting rights of the Games on Wednesday.

Most of the events are expected to be conducted in Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar.

But since diciplines like cricket could require more venues for multiple matches, the organisers could be looking for stadiums at nearby cities. Cricket in T20 format is set to be one of the events in the 2030 CWG. —*PTI*

## Perth pitch receives 'very good' ICC rating after Ashes

**PERTH, 27 NOV**

The pitch at Perth Stadium has been awarded the International Cricket Council's highest rating of "very good" following the first Ashes Test match, which saw Australia defeat England in just two days. The match ended early with 19 wickets falling on the first day, concluding in a total of 847 deliveries, making it the second-shortest completed Test in Australia and the shortest Ashes Test by balls bowled since 1888. Australia's Travis Head shone bright, scoring 123 runs off 83 balls to steer his team to victory.

Match referee Ranjan Madugalle's report praised the pitch, stating it had "good carry, limited seam movement, and consistent bounce early in the match, allowing for a balanced contest between batters and bowlers." England's struggles were highlighted by a collapse from 160 for 5 to 172 all out in their first innings, despite skipper Ben Stokes' five-wicket haul that reduced Australia to 123 for 9. On day two, England posted a target of 205 runs for Australia, who successfully chased it down within 29 overs, propelling the home team to a convincing eight-wicket win. Australia captain Steven Smith remarked, "This wicket kind of gets better, I think at the end of day two." —*ANI*

## Vineeth's fifty in vain as India A fall to Afghan by 65 runs

**BENGALURU, 27 NOV**

VK Vineeth's fighting half-century was not enough as India A lost by 65 runs to Afghanistan in their final league match of the Under-19 Tri-Series here on Thursday. The result, though inconsequential, marked India A's second defeat to the same opponents, having earlier gone down by six wickets on 1 November.

Sent in to bat, Afghanistan posted a competitive 233 for eight. Skipper Mahboob Khan (50) and Azizullah Miakhil (60) struck composed fifties, putting on a crucial 87-run stand after their side had slipped to 83 for four. Earlier, openers Khalid Ahmadzai (30) and Osman Sadat (9) added 39 before a cluster of wickets slowed the innings. Late acceleration came from Nooristani Omarzai (28*) and Abdul Aziz (15*), who added an unbeaten 34 off 21 balls to push the total past 230.

Sent in to bat, Afghanistan posted 233 runs for eight **PHOTO: X/**

India A's chase unraveled immediately, with opener Wafi Diamond Kachchi run out off the first ball. Abdul Aziz (3/48) then cleaned up Lakshya Rajesh Raichandani for a duck as India slumped to 0 for 2. Salam Khan (3/35) removed skipper Vihaan Malhotra (13), Abhigyan Kundu (12) and Mohamed Enaam (1), leaving India 85 for five inside 11 overs.

Vineeth's 62-ball 63, featuring 11 fours and a six, kept India afloat, but left-arm spinner Roohullah Arab dismissed him and Kanishk Chouhan (16) to seal the outcome. India were bowled out for 168 in 30.2 overs.

India A will face Afghanistan again in the final on 30 November. —*PTI*

**WEDDING POSTPONED**

## Jemimah to miss WBBL to 'support' Mandhana

**BRISBANE, 27 NOV**

India's Women's World Cup hero Jemimah Rodrigues will miss the remainder of the Women's Big Bash League (WBBL) season after opting to stay in India to support her teammate Smriti Mandhana, whose wedding has been postponed due to her father's health issues.

Rodrigues returned to India pre-arranged to attend Mandhana's wedding, initially intending to fly back for her commitments with the Brisbane Heat after their match against Hobart Hurricanes. However, upon learning of the situation, she requested to be released from her contract for the remainder of the season, which was agreed upon by the Heat. A statement from the club noted, "Rodrigues will stay in India to support her teammate, and the Heat has agreed to her not returning for the final games of WBBL." —*PTI*

**CHAMP AT 19**

## *Sindarov is Chess World Cup's youngest champ*

**PANAJI, 27 NOV**

Uzbekistan's GM Javokhir Sindarov became the youngest FIDE World Cup 2025 champion after he defeated GM Wei Yi of China in the tiebreak here on Wednesday.

The 19-year-old defeated Wei in the second Rapid Game in the tiebreak with black pieces to become the first Uzbek chess player to win the World Cup and take home a prize purse of 120,000 USD along with the newly christened Viswanathan Anand Cup.

The FIDE World Cup 2025 was played as a single-elimination knock-out tournament and witnessed 206 players from 82 countries aiming for glory in a competition, and also three spots in the Candidates 2026.

In the final, Sindarov played out quick draws in the two classical games against Wei and had banked on his Rapid skills to find a way to win against a player who did not lose a single classical game in the competition.

Uzbekistan's Javokhir Sindarov faced off against China's Wei Yi and defeated him at the FIDE Chess World Cup 2025 in Panaji, Goa **PHOTO: PTI**

Wei was once again solid with black pieces in the first tiebreak game, and the only time engines showed that Sindarov had a chance to find a winning sequence was in the bishop-pawn endgame, but his very next move brought the game back in balance.

In the second Rapid Game, Sindarov started exerting pressure on Wei's king side from the middle game and then pinned his opponent's king with his queen doing the damage. The Chinese finally resigned after the 60th move, and the Uzbek won the World Cup.

Sindarov said, "I am very happy about that..... I want to first be a 2750 player (in terms of rating number) and then play many tournaments and World Championships." —*ANI*

## Siraj has 'worst ever flight' with AI Express

**GUWAHATI, 27 NOV**

- The same flight was cancelled on both 26 and 27 November.

India fast bowler Mohammed Siraj criticised Air India Express after enduring what he described as the "worst airline experience" while travelling from Guwahati to Hyderabad. Siraj said flight IX 2884, scheduled to depart at 7:25 am, was delayed for hours with "no communication from the airline", leaving passengers stranded. "After repeatedly following up, they have just delayed the flight with no proper reasoning... I really would not advise anyone to take this flight," he wrote on X.

Air India Express later responded, saying, "We regret to inform you that the flight has been cancelled due to unforeseen operational reasons"

The situation was further aggravated as the same flight was cancelled on both 26 and 27 November, as reflected on the airline's website.

Siraj's complaint reflects a pattern of customer frustration increasingly visible in Air India Express's social-media replies. One user wrote, "I paid for priority check-in... my luggage arrived very late. I don't know what service I paid for." —*ANI*

## India aims to reclaim Men's Junior Jockey WC

**CHENNAI, 27 NOV**

Hosts India are poised to reclaim the Men's Junior Hockey World Cup title after a nine-year hiatus when they kick off their campaign against Chile in Pool B on Friday. With two titles to their name, the last won in 2016, India is favourite to progress in the tournament, facing teams like Oman, Switzerland, and Chile.

Germany leads the all-time titles with seven, while Argentina also has two, adding to the competitive mix. In the previous edition held in Kuala Lumpur in 2023, India secured fourth place after losing to Spain. This year's championship in Chennai and Madurai marks the first time 24 teams will participate, split into six groups of four in a round-robin format. —*PTI*